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The Moro Portrait of Christopher Columbus

Author's Autograph Edition

LIFE AND VOYAGES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

& THE VOYAGES & DISCOVERIES OF THE COMPANIONS OF COLUMBUS

BY WASHINGTON IRVING

Volume IV.

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The Life and Voyages

of

Christopher Columbus

and of the

Companions of Columbus

AUTHOR'S AUTOGRAPH EDITION

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THE LIFE AND VOYAGES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Chapter III.

SCARCITY OF PROVISIONS—STRATAGEM OF COLUMBUS TO OBTAIN SUPPLIES FROM THE NATIVES.

[1504.]

WHILE Porras and his crew were ranging about with that desperate and joyless licentiousness which attends the abandonment of principle, Columbus presented the opposite picture of a man true to others and to himself, and supported, amidst hardships and difficulties, by conscious rectitude. Deserted by the healthful and vigorous portion of his garrison, he exerted himself to soothe and encourage the infirm and desponding remnant which re-

mained. Regardless of his own painful maladies, he was only attentive to relieve their sufferings. The few who were fit for service were required to mount guard on the wreck, or attend upon the sick; there were none to forage for provisions. The scrupulous good faith and amicable conduct maintained by Columbus towards the natives had now their effect. Considerable supplies of provisions were brought by them from time to time, which he purchased at a reasonable rate. The most palatable and nourishing of these, together with the small stock of European biscuit that remained, he ordered to be appropriated to the sustenance of the infirm. Knowing how much the body is affected by the operations of the mind, he endeavored to rouse the spirits, and animate the hopes of the drooping sufferers. Concealing his own anxiety he maintained a serene and even cheerful countenance, encouraging his men by kind words, and holding forth confident anticipations of speedy relief. By his friendly and careful treatment he soon recruited both the health and spirits of his people, and brought them into a condition to contribute to the common safety. Judicious regulations calmly but firmly enforced maintained everything in order. The men became sensible of the advantages of

wholesome discipline, and perceived that the restraints imposed upon them by their commander were, for their own good, and ultimately productive of their own comfort.

Columbus had thus succeeded in guarding against internal ills, when alarming evils began to menace from without. The Indians, unused to lay up any stock of provisions, and unwilling to subject themselves to extra labor, found it difficult to furnish the quantity of food daily required for so many hungry men. The European trinkets, once so precious, lost their value, in proportion as they became common. The importance of the Admiral had been greatly diminished by the desertion of so many of his followers; and the malignant instigations of the rebels had awakened jealousy and enmity in several of the villages, which had been accustomed to furnish provisions.

By degrees therefore the supplies fell off. The arrangements for the daily delivery of certain quantities, made by Diego Mendez, were irregularly attended to, and at length ceased entirely. The Indians no longer thronged to the harbor with provisions, and often refused them when applied for. The Spaniards were obliged to forage about the neighborhood for their daily food, but found more and more difficulty in procuring it; thus,

in addition to their other causes for despondency they began to entertain horrible apprehensions of famine.

The Admiral heard the melancholy forebodings and beheld the growing evil, but was at a loss for a remedy. To resort to force was an alternative full of danger, and of but temporary efficacy. It would require all those who were well enough to bear arms to sally forth, while he and the rest of the infirm would be left defenceless on board of the wreck, exposed to the vengeance of the natives.

In the meantime the scarcity daily increased. The Indians perceived the wants of the white men, and had learnt from them the art of making bargains. They asked ten times the former quantity of European articles for any amount of provisions, and brought their supplies in scanty quantities to enhance the eagerness of the hungry Spaniards. At length even this relief ceased, and there was an absolute distress for food. The jealousy of the natives had been universally roused by Porras and his followers, and they withheld all provisions, in hopes either of starving the Admiral and his people, or of driving them from the island.

In this extremity a fortunate idea presented itself to Columbus. From his knowledge of

astronomy he ascertained that within three days there would be a total eclipse of the moon in the early part of the night. He sent therefore an Indian of Hispaniola, who served as his interpreter, to summon the principal caciques to a grand conference, appointing for it the day of the eclipse. When all were assembled, he told them by his interpreter, that he and his followers were worshippers of a Deity, who dwelt in the skies, who favored such as did well, but punished all transgressors. That as they must all have noticed, he had protected Diego Mendez and his companions in their voyage, because they went in obedience to the orders of their commander, but had visited Porras and his companions with all kinds of afflictions in consequence of their rebellion. This great Deity, he added, was incensed against the Indians who refused to furnish his faithful worshippers with provisions, and intended to chastise them with famine and pestilence. Lest they should disbelieve this warning, a signal would be given that night. They would behold the moon change its color, and gradually loose its light—a token of the fearful punishment which awaited them.

Many of the Indians were alarmed at the predictions, others treated it with derision,—

all, however, awaited with solicitude the coming of the night. When they beheld a dark shadow stealing over the moon they began to tremble ; with the progress of the eclipse their fears increased, and when they saw a mysterious darkness covering the whole face of nature, there were no bounds to their terror. Seizing upon whatever provisions were at hand, they hurried to the ships ; threw themselves at the feet of Columbus, and implored him to intercede with his God to withhold the threatened calamities, assuring him they would henceforth bring him whatever he required. Columbus shut himself up in his cabin, as if to commune with the Deity, and remained there during the increase of the eclipse ; the forests and shores all the while resounding with the howlings and supplications of the savages. When the eclipse was about to diminish, he came forth and informed the natives that his God had deigned to pardon them, on condition of their fulfilling their promises, in sign of which he would withdraw the darkness from the moon.

When the Indians saw that planet restored to its brightness, and rolling in all its beauty through the firmament, they overwhelmed the Admiral with thanks for his intercession, and repaired to their homes, joyful at having escaped such great disasters. Regarding Co-

lumbus with awe and reverence, as a man in the peculiar favor and confidence of the Deity, since he knew upon earth what was passing in the heavens, they hastened to propitiate him with gifts; supplies again arrived daily at the harbor, and from that time forward there was no want of provisions.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 103. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 33.

Chapter IV.

MISSION OF DIEGO DE ESCOBAR TO THE ADMIRAL.

[1504.]

EIGHT months had now elapsed since the departure of Mendez and Fiesco, without any tidings of their fate. For a long time the Spaniards had kept a wistful lookout upon the ocean, flattering themselves that every Indian canoe gliding at a distance might be the harbinger of deliverance. The hopes of the most sanguine were now fast sinking into despondency. What thousand perils awaited such frail barks and so weak a party on an expedition of the kind! Either the canoes had been swallowed up by boisterous waves and adverse currents, or their crews had perished among the rugged mountains and savage tribes of Hispaniola. To increase their despondency, they were informed that a vessel had been seen, bottom upwards,

drifting with the currents along the coast of Jamaica. This might be the vessel sent to their relief; and if so, all their hopes were shipwrecked with it. This rumor, it is affirmed, was invented and circulated in the island by the rebels, that it might reach the ears of those who remained faithful to the Admiral, and reduce them to despair.* It no doubt had its effect. Losing all hope of aid from a distance, and considering themselves abandoned and forgotten by the world, many grew wild and desperate in their plans. Another conspiracy was formed by one Bernardo, an apothecary of Valencia, with two confederates, Alonzo de Zamora and Pedro de Villatoro. They designed to seize upon the remaining canoes, and seek their way to Hispaniola.†

The mutiny was on the very point of breaking out when one evening toward dusk a sail was seen standing toward the harbor. The transports of the poor Spaniards may be more easily conceived than described. The vessel was of small size; it kept out to sea, but sent its boat to visit the ships. Every eye was eagerly bent to hail the countenances of Christians and deliverers. As the boat approached they descried in it Diego de Escobar, a man

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 104.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 33.

who had been one of the most active confederates of Roldan in his rebellion, who had been condemned to death under the administration of Columbus, and pardoned by his successor Bobadilla. There was bad omen in such a messenger.

Coming alongside of the ships, Escobar put a letter on board from Ovando, governor of Hispaniola, together with a barrel of wine and a side of bacon, sent as presents to the Admiral. He then drew off and talked with Columbus at a distance. He told them that he was sent by the governor to express his great concern at his misfortunes, and his regret at not having in port a vessel of sufficient size to bring off himself and his people; but that he would send one as soon as possible. Escobar gave the Admiral assurances likewise, that his concerns in Hispaniola had been faithfully attended to. He requested him, if he had any letters to write to the governor in reply, to give it to him as soon as possible, as he wished to return immediately.

There was something extremely singular in this mission, but there was no time for comments. Escobar was urgent to depart. Columbus hastened therefore to write a reply to Ovando, depicting the dangers and distresses of his situation, increased as they were

by the rebellion of Porras, but expressing his reliance on his promise to send him relief, confiding in which he should remain patiently on board of his wreck. He recommended Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco to his favor, assuring him that they were not sent to San Domingo with any artful design, but simply to represent his perilous situation and to apply for succor.* When Escobar received this letter he returned immediately on board of his vessel, which made all sail and soon disappeared in the gathering gloom of the night.

If the Spaniards had hailed the arrival of this vessel with transport, its sudden departure and the mysterious conduct of Escobar inspired no less wonder and consternation. He had kept aloof from all communications with them, as if he felt no interest in their welfare or sympathy in their misfortunes. Columbus saw the gloom that had gathered in their countenances and feared the consequences. He eagerly sought therefore to dispel their suspicions, professing himself satisfied with the communications received from Ovando, and assuring him that vessels would soon arrive to take them all away. In consequence of this, he said, he had declined to depart with Escobar, because his vessel was too small to

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 34.

take the whole, preferring to remain with them and share their lot, and had despatched the caravel in such haste that no time might be lost in expediting the necessary ships. These assurances and the certainty that their situation was known in San Domingo cheered the hearts of the people. Their hopes again revived; and the conspiracy which had been on the point of breaking forth was completely disconcerted.

In secret, however, Columbus was exceedingly indignant at the conduct of Ovando. He had left him for many months in a state of the utmost danger and most distressing uncertainty, exposed to the hostilities of the natives, the seditions of his men, and the suggestions of his own despair. He had at length sent a mere tantalizing message by a man known to be one of his bitterest enemies, with a present of food, which, from its scantiness, seemed intended to mock their necessities.

Columbus believed that Ovando had purposely neglected him, hoping that he might perish on the island, being apprehensive that, should he return in safety, he would be reinstated in the government of Hispaniola; and he considered Escobar merely as a spy sent to ascertain the state of himself and his crew, and whether they were yet in existence. Las

Casas, who was then at San Domingo, expresses similar suspicions. He says that Escobar was chosen because Ovando was certain that from ancient enmity he would have no sympathy for the Admiral. That he was ordered not to go on board of the vessels, nor to land, neither was he to hold conversation with any of the crew, nor to receive any letters, except those of the Admiral. In a word, that he was a mere scout to collect information.*

Others have ascribed the long neglect of Ovando to extreme caution. There was a rumor prevalent that Columbus, irritated at the suspension of his dignities by the court of Spain, intended to transfer his newly discovered countries into the hands of his native republic, Genoa, or of some other power. Such rumors had long been current; and to their recent circulation Columbus himself alludes in his letter sent to the sovereigns by Diego Mendez. The most plausible apology given, is that Ovando was absent for several months in the interior, occupied in wars with the natives, and that there were no ships at San Domingo of sufficient burden to take Columbus and his crew to Spain. He may have feared that, should they come to reside for any length of

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 33. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 103.

time on the island, either the Admiral would interfere in public affairs or endeavor to make a party in his favor; or that, in consequence of the number of his old enemies still resident there, former scenes of faction and turbulence might be revived.* In the meantime the situation of Columbus in Jamaica, while it disposed of him quietly until vessels should arrive from Spain, could not, he may have thought, be hazardous. He had sufficient force and arms for defence, and he had made amicable arrangements with the natives for the supply of provisions, as Diego Mendez, who had made those arrangements, had no doubt informed him. Such may have been the reasoning by which Ovando, under the real influence of his interest, may have reconciled his conscience to a measure which excited the strong reprobation of his contemporaries, and has continued to draw upon him the suspicions of mankind.

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.* *Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.*

Chapter V.

VOYAGE OF DIEGO MENDEZ AND BARTHOLOMEW FIESCO IN A CANOE TO HISPANIOLA.

[1504.]

IT is proper to give here some account of the mission of Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco, and of the circumstances which prevented the latter from returning to Jamaica. Having taken leave of the Adelantado at the east end of the island, they continued all day in a direct course, animating the Indians who navigated their canoes, and who frequently paused at their labor. There was no wind, the sky was without a cloud, and the sea perfectly calm; the heat was intolerable, and the rays of the sun reflected from the surface of the ocean seemed to scorch their very eyes. The Indians, exhausted by heat and toil, would often leap into the water to cool and refresh themselves, and after remaining there a short

time, would return with new vigor to their labors. At the going down of the sun they lost sight of land. During the night the Indians took turns, one half to row while the others slept. The Spaniards in like manner divided their forces; while one half took repose, the others kept guard with their weapons in hand, ready to defend themselves in case of any perfidy on the part of their savage companions.

Watching and toiling in this way through the night, they were exceedingly fatigued at the return of day. Nothing was to be seen but sea and sky. Their frail canoes, heaving up and down with the swelling and sinking of the ocean, seemed scarcely capable of sustaining the broad undulations of a calm; how would they be able to live amid waves and surges, should the wind arise? The commanders did all they could to keep up the flagging spirits of the men. Sometimes they permitted them a respite; at other times they took the paddles and shared their toils. But labor and fatigue were soon forgotten in a new source of suffering. During the preceding sultry day and night, the Indians, parched and fatigued, had drunk up all the water. They now began to experience the torments of thirst. In proportion as the day advanced their thirst in-

creased; the calm which favored the navigation of the canoes, rendered this misery the more intense. There was not a breeze to fan the air nor counteract the ardent rays of a tropical sun. Their sufferings were irritated by the prospect around them—nothing but water, while they were perishing with thirst. At mid-day their strength failed them, and they could work no longer. Fortunately, at this time the commanders of the canoes found, or pretended to find, two small kegs of water, which they had perhaps secretly reserved for such an extremity. Administering the precious contents from time to time, in sparing mouthfuls, to their companions, and particularly to the laboring Indians, they enabled them to resume their toils. They cheered them with the hopes of soon arriving at a small island called Navasa, which lay directly in their way, and was only eight leagues from Hispaniola. Here they would be able to procure water, and might take repose.

For the rest of the day they continued faintly and wearily laboring forward, and keeping an anxious lookout for the island. The day passed away, the sun went down, yet there was no sign of land, not even a cloud on the horizon that might deceive them into a hope. According to their calculations, they had certainly come the distance from Jamaica at which Na-

vasa lay. They began to fear that they had deviated from their course. If so, they should miss the island entirely, and perish with thirst before they could reach Hispaniola.

The night closed upon them without any sight of the island. They now despaired of touching at it, for it was so small and low that, even if they were to pass near it, they would scarcely be able to perceive it in the dark. One of the Indians sank and died, under the accumulated sufferings of labor, heat, and raging thirst. His body was thrown into the sea. Others lay panting and gasping at the bottom of the canoes. Their companions, troubled in spirit and exhausted in strength, feebly continued their toils. Sometimes they endeavored to cool their parched palates by taking sea-water in their mouths, but its briny acrimony rather increased their thirst. Now and then, but very sparingly, they were allowed a drop of water from the kegs ; but this was only in cases of the utmost extremity, and principally to those who were employed in rowing. The night had far advanced, but those whose turn it was to take repose were unable to sleep, from the intensity of their thirst ; or if they slept, it was but to be tantalized with dreams of cool fountains and running brooks, and to awaken in redoubled

torment. The last drop of water had been dealt out to the Indian rowers, but it only served to irritate their sufferings. They scarce could move their paddles; one after another gave up, and it seemed impossible they should live to reach Hispaniola.

The commanders by admirable management had hitherto kept up this weary struggle with suffering and despair; they too now began to despond. Diego Mendez sat watching the horizon, which was gradually lighting up with those faint rays which precede the rising of the moon. As that planet rose he perceived it to emerge from behind some dark mass elevated above the level of the ocean. He immediately gave the animating cry of "land!" His almost expiring companions was roused by it to new life. It proved to be the island of Navasa, but so small, and low, and distant, that had it not been thus revealed by the rising of the moon, they would never have discovered it. The error in their reckoning with respect to the island had arisen from miscalculating the rate of sailing of the canoes, and from not making sufficient allowance for the fatigue of the rowers and the opposition of the current.

New vigor was now diffused throughout the crews. They exerted themselves with feverish impatience; by the dawn of day they reached

the land, and springing on shore returned thanks to God for such signal deliverance. The island was a mere mass of rocks, half a league in circuit. There was neither tree, nor shrub, nor herbage, nor stream, nor fountain. Hurrying about with anxious search they found to their joy abundance of rain-water in the hollows of the rocks. Eagerly scooping it up with their calabashes they quenched their burning thirst by immoderate draughts. In vain the more prudent warned the others of their danger. The Spaniards were in some degree restrained; but the poor Indians, whose toils had increased the fever of their thirst, gave way to a kind of frantic indulgence. Several died upon the spot, and others fell dangerously ill.*

Having allayed their thirst they now looked about in search of food. A few shell-fish were found along the shore, and Diego Mendez striking a light and gathering drift-wood, they were enabled to boil them and to make a delicious banquet. All day they remained reposing in the shade of the rocks, refreshing

* Not far from the island of Navasa there gushes up in the sea a pure fountain of fresh water that sweetens the surface for some distance: this circumstance was of course unknown to the Spaniards at the time. (Oviedo, *Cronica*, lib. vi., cap. 12.)

themselves after their intolerable sufferings, and gazing upon Hispaniola, whose mountains rose above the horizon at eight leagues distance.

In the cool of the evening they once more embarked, invigorated by repose, and arrived safely at Cape Tiburon on the following day, the fourth since their departure from Jamaica. Here they landed on the banks of a beautiful river, where they were kindly received and treated by the natives. Such are the particulars, collected from various sources, of this adventurous and interesting voyage, on the precarious success of which depended the deliverance of Columbus and his crews.* The voyagers remained for two days among the hospitable natives on the banks of the river to refresh themselves. Fiesco would have returned to Jamaica, according to promise, to give assurance to the Admiral and his companions of the safe arrival of their messenger; but both Spaniards and Indians had suffered so much during the voyage that nothing could induce them to encounter the perils of a return in the canoes.

Parting with his companions, Diego Mendez took six Indians of the islands and set off

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 105. Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 31. Testament of Diego Mendez. Navarrete, tom. i.

resolutely to coast in his canoe one hundred and thirty leagues to San Domingo. After proceeding for eighty leagues with infinite toil, always against the currents, and subject to perils from the native tribes, he was informed that the Governor had departed for Xaragua, fifty leagues distant. Still undaunted by fatigues and difficulties, he abandoned his canoe and proceeded alone and on foot, through forests and over mountains, until he arrived at Xaragua, achieving one of the most perilous expeditions ever undertaken by a devoted follower for the safety of his commander.

Ovando received him with great kindness, expressing the utmost concern at the unfortunate situation of Columbus. He made many promises of sending immediate relief, but suffered day after day, week after week, and even month after month to elapse without carrying his promises into effect. He was at that time completely engrossed by wars with the natives, and had a ready plea that there were no ships of sufficient burden at San Domingo. Had he felt a proper zeal however for the safety of a man like Columbus, it would have been easy, within eight months, to have devised some means, if not of delivering him from his situation, at least of conveying to him ample reinforcements and supplies.

The faithful Mendez remained for seven months in Xaragua, detained there under various pretexts by Ovando, who was unwilling that he should proceed to San Domingo; partly, as is intimated, from his having some jealousy of his being employed in secret agency for the Admiral, and partly from a desire to throw impediments in the way of his obtaining the required relief. At length, by daily importunity, he obtained permission to go to San Domingo and await the arrival of certain ships which were expected, of which he proposed to purchase one on the account of the Admiral. He immediately set out on foot a distance of seventy leagues, part of his toilsome journey lying through forests and among mountains infested by hostile and exasperated Indians. It was after his departure that Ovando despatched the caravel commanded by the pardoned rebel Escobar, on that singular and equivocal visit, which, in the eyes of Columbus, had the air of a mere scouting expedition to spy into the camp of an enemy.

Chapter VII.

OVERTURES OF COLUMBUS TO THE MUTINEERS—BATTLE OF THE ADELANTADO WITH PORRAS AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

[1504.]

WHEN Columbus had soothed the disappointment of his men at the brief and unsatisfactory visit and sudden departure of Escobar, he endeavored to turn the event to some advantage with the rebels. He knew them to be disheartened by the inevitable miseries attending a lawless and dissolute life; that many longed to return to the safe and quiet path of duty; and that the most malignant, seeing how he had foiled all their intrigues among the natives to produce a famine, began to fear his ultimate triumph and consequent vengeance. A favorable opportunity, he thought, now presented to take advantage of these feelings, and by gentle means to bring them back

to their allegiance. He sent two of his people, therefore, who were most intimate with the rebels, to inform them of the recent arrival of Escobar with letters from the governor of Hispaniola, promising him a speedy deliverance from the island. He now offered a free pardon, kind treatment, and a passage with him in the expected ships, on condition of their immediate return to obedience. To convince them of the arrival of the vessel, he sent them a part of the bacon which had been brought by Escobar.

On the approach of these ambassadors, Francisco de Porras came forth to meet them, accompanied solely by a few of the ringleaders of his party. He imagined that there might be some propositions from the Admiral, and he was fearful of their being heard by the mass of his people, who, in their dissatisfied and repentant mood, would be likely to desert him on the least prospect of pardon. Having listened to the tidings and overtures brought by the messengers, he and his confidential confederates consulted for some time together. Perfidious in their own nature they suspected the sincerity of the Admiral; and conscious of the extent of their offences doubted his having the magnanimity to pardon them. Determined, therefore, not to confide in his proffered amnesty, they replied to the messenger, that they had

no wish to return to the ships, but preferred living at large about the island. They offered to engage, however, to conduct themselves peaceably and amicably, on receiving a solemn promise from the Admiral, that should two vessels arrive they should have one to depart in; should but one arrive, that half of it should be granted to them: and that, moreover, the Admiral should share with them the stores and articles of Indian traffic remaining in the ships, having lost all that they had, in the sea. These demands were pronounced extravagant and inadmissible, upon which they replied insolently, that if they were not peaceably conceded they would take them by force; and with this menace they dismissed the ambassadors.*

The conference was not conducted so privately but that the rest of the rebels learnt the purport of the mission; and the offer of pardon and deliverance occasioned great tumult and agitation. Porras, fearful of their desertion, assured them that these offers of the Admiral were all deceitful; that he was naturally cool and vindictive, and only sought to get them into his power to wreck on them his vengeance. He exhorted them to persist in their opposition

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 35. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 106.

to his tyranny; reminding them that those who had formerly done so in Hispaniola had eventually triumphed, and sent him home in irons. He assured them that they might do the same; and again made vaunting promises of protection in Spain, through the influence of his relatives. But the boldest of his assertions was in respect to the caravel of Escobar. It shows the ignorance of the age, and the superstitious awe which the common people entertained with respect to Columbus and his astronomical knowledge. Porras assured them that no real caravel had arrived, but a mere phantasm conjured up by the Admiral, who was deeply versed in necromancy. In proof of this he averted to its arriving in the dusk of the evening, its holding communication with no one but the Admiral, and its sudden disappearance in the night. Had it been a real caravel the crew would have sought to talk with their countrymen; the Admiral, his son, and brother would have eagerly embarked on board, and it would at any rate have remained a little while in port, and not have vanished so suddenly and mysteriously.*

By these and similar delusions Porras succeeded in working upon the feelings and credu-

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 106. Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 35.

lity of his followers. Fearful however that they might yield to after reflection, and to further offers from the Admiral, he determined to involve them in some act of violence which would commit them beyond all hopes of forgiveness. He marched them, therefore to an Indian village called Maima,* about a quarter of a league from the ships, intending to plunder the stores remaining on board the wreck, and to take the Admiral prisoner.†

Columbus had notice of the designs of the rebels, and of their approach. Being confined by his infirmities he sent his brother to endeavor with mild words to persuade them from their purpose, and win them to obedience; but with sufficient force to resist any violence. The Adelantado, who was a man rather of deeds than of words, took with him fifty followers, men of tried resolution and ready to fight in any cause. They were well armed and full of courage, though many were pale and debilitated from recent sickness and from long confinement to the ships. Arriving on the side of a hill within bow-shot of the village the Adelantado discovered the rebels, and despatched the same two messengers to treat with them, who had already carried them

* At present Mammee Bay.

† *Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.*

the offer of pardon. Porras and his fellow-leaders, however, would not permit them to approach. They confided in the superiority of their numbers, and in their men being for the most part hardy sailors, rendered robust and vigorous by the roving life they had been leading in the forests and the open air. They knew that many of those who were with the Adelantado were men brought up in a softer mode of life. They pointed to their pale countenances, and persuaded their followers that they were mere household men, fair-weather troops, who could never stand before them. They did not reflect that with such men pride and lofty spirit often more than supply the place of bodily force; and they forgot that their adversaries had the incalculable advantage of justice and law upon their side. Deluded by their words their followers were excited to a transient glow of courage, and brandishing their weapons refused to listen to the messengers.

Six of the stoutest rebels made a league to stand by one another and attack the Adelantado; for, he being killed, the rest would be easily defeated. The main body formed themselves into a squadron, drawing their swords and shaking their lances. They did not wait to be assailed, but, uttering shouts and men-

aces, rushed upon the enemy. They were so well received, however, that at the first shock four or five were killed, most of them the confederates who had leagued to attack the Adelantado. The latter with his own hand killed Juan Sanchez, the same powerful mariner who had carried off the Cacique Quibian; and Juan Barber also, who had first drawn a sword against the Admiral in this rebellion. The Adelantado with his usual vigor and courage was dealing his blows about him in the thickest of the affray, where several lay killed and wounded, when he was assailed by Francisco de Porras. The rebel with a blow of his sword cleft the buckler of Don Bartholomew, and wounded the hand which grasped it. The sword remained wedged in the shield, and before Porras could withdraw it the Adelantado closed upon him, grappled him, and being assisted by others, after a severe struggle took him prisoner.*

When the rebels beheld their leader a captive their transient courage was at an end, and they fled in confusion. The Adelantado would have pursued them, but was persuaded to let them escape with the punishment they had received; especially as it was necessary to guard

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 107. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 35.

The Fight with Porras

From Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

Isla Jamaica

against the possibility of an attack from the Indians.

The latter had taken arms and drawn up in battle array, gazing with astonishment at this fight between white men, but without taking part on either side. When the battle was over they approached the field, gazing upon the dead bodies of the beings they had once fancied immortal. They were curious in examining the wounds made by the Christian weapons. Among the wounded insurgents was Pedro Ledesma, the same pilot who so bravely swam ashore at Veragua to procure tidings of the colony. He was a man of prodigious muscular force, and a hoarse, deep voice. As the Indians, who thought him dead, were inspecting the wounds with which he was literally covered, he suddenly uttered an ejaculation in his tremendous voice, at the sound of which the savages fled in dismay. This man having fallen into a cleft or ravine was not discovered by the white men until the dawning of the following day, having remained all that time without a drop of water. The number and severity of the wounds he is said to have received would seem incredible, but they are mentioned by Fernando Columbus, who was an eye-witness, and by Las Casas, who had the account from Ledesma himself. For want

of proper remedies, his wounds were treated in the roughest manner; yet, through the aid of a vigorous constitution, he completely recovered. Las Casas conversed with him several years afterwards at Seville, when he obtained from him various particulars concerning this voyage of Columbus. Some few days after this conversation, however, he heard that Ledesma had fallen under the knife of an assassin.*

The Adelantado returned in triumph to the ships, where he was received by the Admiral in the most affectionate manner, thanking him as his deliverer. He brought Porras and several of his followers prisoners. Of his own party only two had been wounded—himself in the hand, and the Admiral's steward, who had received an apparently slight wound with a lance, equal to one of the most insignificant of those with which Ledesma was covered; yet, in spite of careful treatment, he died.

On the next day, the 20th of May, the fugitives sent a petition to the Admiral, signed with all their names, in which, says Las Casas, they confessed all their misdeeds and cruelties and evil intentions, supplicating the Admiral to have pity on them and pardon them for their rebellion, for which God had already punished them. They offered to return to

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 32.

their obedience and to serve him faithfully in future, making an oath to that effect upon a cross and a missal, accompanied by an imprecation worthy of being recorded: "They hoped, should they break their oath, that no priest, or other Christian might ever confess them; that repentance might be of no avail; that they might be deprived of the holy sacraments of the Church; that at their death they might receive no benefit from bulls nor indulgences; that their bodies might be cast out into the fields like those of heretics and renegadoes, instead of being buried in holy ground; and that they might not receive absolution from the Pope, nor from cardinals, nor archbishops, nor bishops, nor any other Christian priests."* Such were the awful imprecations by which these men endeavored to add validity to an oath. The worthlessness of a man's word may always be known by the extravagant means he uses to enforce it.

The Admiral saw by the abject nature of this petition how completely the spirit of these misguided men was broken; with his wonted magnanimity he readily granted their prayer, and pardoned their offences; but on one condition, that their ringleader, Francisco Porras should remain a prisoner.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 32.

As it was difficult to maintain so many persons on board of the ships, and as quarrels might take place between persons who had so recently been at blows, Columbus put the late followers of Porras under the command of a discreet and faithful man; and giving in his charge a quantity of European articles for the purpose of purchasing food of the natives, directed them to forage about the island until the expected vessels should arrive.

At length, after a long year of alternate hope and despondency, the doubts of the Spaniards were joyfully dispelled by the sight of two vessels standing into the harbor. One proved to be a ship hired and well victualled at the expense of the Admiral, by the faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez*; the other

* Some brief notice of the further fortunes of Diego Mendez may be interesting to the reader. When King Ferdinand heard of his faithful services, says Oviedo, he bestowed rewards upon Mendez, and permitted him to bear a canoe in his coat-of-arms, as a momento of his loyalty. He continued devotedly attached to the Admiral, serving him zealously after his return to Spain, and during his last illness. Columbus retained the most grateful and affectionate sense of his fidelity. On his death-bed he promised Mendez that, in reward for his services, he should be appointed principal alguazil of the island of Hispaniola; an engagement which the Admiral's son, Don Diego,

had been subsequently fitted out by Ovando, and put under the command of Diego de Salcedo, the Admiral's agent employed to collect his rents in San Domingo.

who was present, cheerfully undertook to perform. A few years afterwards, when the latter succeeded to the office of his father, Mendez reminded him of the promise, but Don Diego informed him that he had given the office to his uncle Don Bartholomew; he assured him however that he should receive something equivalent. Mendez shrewdly replied, that the equivalent had better be given to Don Bartholomew, and the office to himself, according to agreement. The promise remained however unperformed, and Diego Mendez, unrewarded. He was afterwards engaged on voyages of discovery in vessels of his own, but met with many vicissitudes, and appears to have died in impoverished circumstances. His last will, from which these particulars are principally gathered, was dated in Valladolid, the 19th of June, 1536, by which it is evident he must have been in the prime of life at the time of his voyage with the Admiral. In this will he requested that the reward which had been promised to him should be paid to his children, by making his eldest son principal alguazil for life of the city of San Domingo, and his other son lieutenant to the Admiral for the same city. It does not appear whether this request was complied with under the successors of Don Diego.

In another clause of his will, he desired that a large stone should be placed upon his sepulchre, on which should be engraved, "Here lies the honorable Cava-

The long neglect of Ovando to attend to the relief of Columbus had, it seems, roused the public indignation, insomuch that animadversions had been made upon his conduct even in the pulpits. This is affirmed by Las Casas,

lier Diego Mendez, who served greatly the Royal Crown of Spain, in the conquest of the Indies, with the Admiral Don Christopher Columbus, of glorious memory, who made the discovery; and afterwards by himself, with ships at his own cost. He died, etc., etc. Bestow in charity a Paternoster, and an Ave Maria."

He ordered that in the midst of this stone there should be carved an Indian canoe, as given him by the King for armorial bearings in memorial of his voyage from Jamaica to Hispaniola, and above it should be engraved in large letters, the word "CANOA." He enjoined upon his heirs to be loyal to the Admiral (Don Diego Columbus), and his lady, and gave them much ghostly counsel, mingled with pious benedictions. As an heirloom in his family, he bequeathed his library, consisting of a few volumes, which accompanied him in his wanderings, viz: *The Art of Holy Dying*, by Erasmus; A sermon of the same author, in Spanish; the *Lingua* and the *Colloquies* of the same; *The History* of Josephus; *The Moral Philosophy* of Aristotle; *The Book of the Holy Land;* a book called the *Contemplation of the Passion of our Saviour; A Tract on the Vengeance of the Death of Agamemnon*, and several other short treatises. This curious and characteristic testament is in the archives of the Duke of Veragua, in Madrid.

who was at San Domingo at the time. If the Governor had really entertained hopes that, during the delay of relief, Columbus might perish in the island, the report brought back by Escobar must have completely disappointed him. No time was to be lost if he wished to claim any merit in his deliverance, or to avoid the disgrace of having totally neglected him. He exerted himself, therefore, at the eleventh hour, and despatched a caravel at the same time with the ship sent by Diego Mendez. The latter, having faithfully discharged this part of his mission, and seen the ships depart, proceeded to Spain on the further concerns of the Admiral.

Book XVII.

Chapter II.

ADMINISTRATION OF OVANDO IN HISPANIOLA—OPPRESSION OF THE NATIVES.

[1503.]

BEFORE relating the return of Columbus to Hispaniola, it is proper to notice some of the principal occurrences which took place in that island under the government of Ovando. A great crowd of adventurers of various ranks had thronged his fleet—eager speculators, credulous dreamers, and broken-down gentlemen of desperate fortunes; all expecting to enrich themselves suddenly in an island where gold was to be picked up from the surface of the soil, or gathered from the mountain brooks. They had scarcely landed, says Las Casas, who accompanied the expedition, when they all hurried off to the mines, about eight leagues distance. The roads swarmed like ant-hills,

with adventurers of all classes. Every one had his knapsack stored with biscuit or flour, and his mining implements on his shoulder. Those *hidalgos*, or gentlemen, who had no servants to carry their burdens, bore them on their own backs, and lucky was he who had a horse for the journey; he would be able to bring back the greater load of treasure. They all set out in high spirits, eager who should first reach the golden land; thinking they had but to arrive at the mines, and collect riches; "for they fancied," said Las Casas, "that gold was to be gathered as easily and readily as fruit from the trees." When they arrived, however, they discovered, to their dismay, that it was necessary to dig painfully into the bowels of the earth—a labor to which most of them had never been accustomed; that it required experience and sagacity to detect the veins of ore; that, in fact, the whole process of mining was exceedingly toilsome, demanding vast patience and much experience, and, after all, was full of uncertainty. They digged eagerly for a time, but found no ore. They grew hungry, threw by their implements, sat down to eat, and returned to work. It was all in vain. "Their labor," says Las Casas, "gave them a keen appetite and quick digestion, but no gold." They soon consumed their provisions,

exhausted their patience, cursed their infatuation, and in eight days set off drearily on their return along the roads they had lately trod so exultingly. They arrived at San Domingo without an ounce of gold, half-famished, downcast, and despairing.* Such is too often the case of those who ignorantly engage in mining—of all speculations the most brilliant, promising, and fallacious.

Poverty soon fell upon these misguided men. They exhausted the little property brought from Spain. Many suffered extremely from hunger, and were obliged to exchange even their apparel for bread. Some formed connections with the old settlers of the island; but the greater part were like men lost and bewildered, and just awakened from a dream. The miseries of the mind, as usual, heightened the sufferings of the body. Some wasted away and died broken-hearted; others were hurried off by raging fevers; so that there soon perished upwards of a thousand men.

Ovando was reputed a man of great prudence and sagacity, and he certainly took several judicious measures for the regulation of the island, and the relief of the colonists. He made arrangements for distributing the married persons and the families which had come out

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 6.

in his fleet, in four towns in the interior, granting them important privileges. He revived the drooping zeal for mining, by reducing the royal share of the product from one half to a third, and shortly after to a fifth; but he empowered the Spaniards to avail themselves, in the most oppressive manner, of the labor of the unhappy natives in working the mines. The charge of treating the natives with severity had been one of those chiefly urged against Columbus. It is proper, therefore, to notice, in this respect, the conduct of his successor, a man chosen for his prudence, and his supposed capacity to govern.

It will be recollected that when Columbus was in a manner compelled to assign lands to the rebellious followers of Francisco Roldan, in 1499, he had made an arrangement that the caciques in their vicinity should, in lieu of tribute, furnish a number of their subjects to assist them in cultivating their estates. This, as has been observed, was the commencement of the disastrous system of *repartimientos*, or distributions of Indians. When Bobadilla administered the government, he constrained the caciques to furnish a number of Indians to each Spaniard, for the purpose of working the mines, where they were employed like beasts of burden. He made an enumeration of the

natives, to prevent evasion ; reduced them into classes, and distributed them among the Spanish inhabitants. The enormous oppressions which ensued have been noticed. They roused the indignation of Isabella ; and when Ovando was sent out to supersede Bobadilla, in 1502, the natives were pronounced free ; they immediately refused to labor in the mines.

Ovando represented to the Spanish sovereigns, in 1503, that ruinous consequences resulted to the colony from this entire liberty granted to the Indians. He stated that the tribute could not be collected, for the Indians were lazy and improvident; that they could only be kept from vices and irregularities by occupation ; that they now kept aloof from the Spaniards, and from all instruction in the Christian faith.

The last representation had an influence with Isabella, and drew a letter from the sovereigns to Ovando, in 1503, in which he was ordered to spare no pains to attach the natives to the Spanish nation and the Catholic religion. To make them labor moderately, if absolutely essential to their own good ; but to temper authority with persuasion and kindness. To pay them regularly and fairly for their labor, and to have them instructed in religion on certain days.

Ovando availed himself of the powers given him by this letter to their fullest extent. He assigned to each Castilian a certain number of Indians, according to the quality of the applicant, the nature of the application, or his own pleasure. It was arranged in the form of an order on a cacique for a certain number of Indians, who were to be paid by their employer, and instructed in the Catholic faith. The pay was so small as to be little better than nominal; the instruction was little more than the mere ceremony of baptism; and the term of labor was at first six months, and then eight months in the year. Under cover of this hired labor, intended for the good both of their bodies and their souls, more intolerable toil was exacted from them, and more horrible cruelties were inflicted, than in the worst days of Bobadilla. They were separated often the distance of several days' journey from their wives and children, and doomed to intolerable labor of all kinds, extorted by the cruel infliction of the lash. For food they had the cassava bread, an unsubstantial support for men obliged to labor; sometimes a scanty portion of pork was distributed among a great number of them, scarce a mouthful to each. When the Spaniards who superintended the mines were at their repast, says Las Casas, the famished In-

Columbus and his Sons Ferdinand and Diego

From an ancient Spanish picture in the possession of Edward Horne, Esq., of Bevis Mount and Southampton. From Edwards' "West Indies," 1794.

dians scrambled under the table, like dogs, for any bone thrown to them. After they had gnawed and sucked it, they pounded it between stones, and mixed it with their cassava bread, that nothing of so precious a morsel might be lost. As to those who labored in the fields, they never tasted either flesh or fish; a little cassava bread and a few roots were their support. While the Spaniards thus withheld the nourishment necessary to sustain their health and strength, they exacted a degree of labor sufficient to break down the most vigorous man. If the Indians fled from this incessant toil and barbarous coercion, and took refuge in the mountains, they were hunted out like wild beasts, scourged in the most inhuman manner, and laden with chains to prevent a second escape. Many perished long before their term of labor had expired. Those who survived their term of six or eight months, were permitted to return to their homes until the next term commenced. But their homes were often forty, sixty, and eighty leagues distant. They had nothing to sustain them through the journey but a few roots or agi peppers, or a little cassava bread. Worn down by long toil and cruel hardships, which their feeble constitutions were incapable of sustaining, many had not strength to perform the

journey, but sank down and died by the way; some by the side of a brook, others under the shade of a tree, where they had crawled for shelter from the sun. "I have found many dead in the road," says Las Casas, "others gasping under the trees, and others in the pangs of death, faintly crying 'Hunger! hunger'"* Those who reached their homes most commonly found them desolate. During the eight months they had been absent, their wives and children had either perished or wandered away; the fields on which they depended for food were overrun with weeds, and nothing was left them but to lie down, exhausted and despairing, and die at the threshold of their habitation.†

It is impossible to pursue any further the picture drawn by the venerable Las Casas, not of what he had heard, but of what he had seen; nature and humanity revolt at the details. Suffice it to say that, so intolerable were the toils and sufferings inflicted upon this weak and unoffending race, that they sank under them, dissolving, as it were, from the face of the earth. Many killed themselves in despair and even mothers overcame the powerful instincts of nature, and destroyed the infants at

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 14, MS.

† *Idem, ubi sup.*

their breasts, to spare them a life of wretchedness. Twelve years had not elapsed since the discovery of the island, and several hundred thousand of its native inhabitants had perished, miserable victims to the grasping avarice of the white men.

Chapter III.

MASSACRE AT XARAGUA—FATE OF ANACAONA.

[1503.]

THE sufferings of the natives under the civil policy of Ovando have been briefly shown; it remains to give a concise view of the military operations of this commander, so lauded by certain of the early historians for his prudence. By this notice a portion of the eventful history of this island will be recounted which is connected with the fortunes of Columbus, and which comprises the thorough subjugation, and, it may almost be said, extermination of the native inhabitants. And first we must treat of the disasters of the beautiful province of Xaragua, the seat of hospitality, the refuge of the suffering Spaniards; and of the fate of the female cacique, Anacaona, once the pride of the island, and the generous friend of white men.

Behechio, the ancient cacique of this province, being dead, Anacaona, his sister, had succeeded to the government. The marked partiality which she once manifested for the Spaniards had been greatly weakened by the general misery they had produced in her country, and by the brutal profligacy exhibited in her immediate dominions by the followers of Roldan. The unhappy story of the love of her beautiful daughter Higuenamota with the young Spaniard Hernando de Guevara, had also caused her great affliction; and, finally, the various and enduring hardships inflicted on her once happy subjects by the grinding systems of labor enforced by Bobadilla and Ovando, had at length, it is said, converted her friendship into absolute detestation.

This disgust was kept alive and aggravated by the Spaniards who lived in her immediate neighborhood, and had obtained grants of land there—a remnant of the rebel faction of Roldan, who retained the gross licentiousness and open profligacy in which they had been indulged under the loose misrule of that commander, and who made themselves odious to the inferior caciques, by exacting services tyrannically and capriciously under the baneful system of *repartimientos*.

The Indians of this province were uniformly

represented as a more intelligent, polite, and generous-spirited race than any others of the islands. They were the more prone to feel and resent the overbearing treatment to which they were subjected. Quarrels sometimes took place between the caciques and their oppressors. These were immediately reported to the Governor as dangerous mutinies; and a resistance to any capricious and extortionate exaction was magnified into a rebellious resistance to the authority of government. Complaints of this kind were continually pouring in upon Ovando, until he was persuaded by some alarmist, or some designing mischief-maker, that there was a deep-laid conspiracy among the Indians of this province to rise upon the Spaniards.

Ovando immediately set out for Xaragua at the head of three hundred foot-soldiers, armed with swords, arquebuses, and cross-bows, and seventy horsemen, with cuirasses, bucklers, and lances. He pretended that he was going on a mere visit of friendship to Anacaona, and to make arrangements about the payment of tribute.

When Anacaona heard of the intended visit, she summoned all her tributary caciques, and principal subjects, to assemble at her chief town that they might receive the commander

of the Spaniards with becoming homage and distinction. As Ovando, at the head of his little army, approached, she went forth to meet him, according to the custom of her nation, attended by a great train of her most distinguished subjects, male and female; who, as has been before observed, were noted for superior grace and beauty. They received the Spaniards with their popular *areytos*, their national songs; the young women waving palm branches and dancing before them, in the way that had so much charmed the followers of the Adelantado, on his first visit to the province.

Anacaona treated the Governor with that natural graciousness and dignity for which she was celebrated. She gave him the largest house in the place for his residence, and his people were quartered in the houses adjoining. For several days the Spaniards were entertained with all the natural luxuries that the province afforded. National songs and dances and games were performed for their amusement, and there was every outward demonstration of the same hospitality, the same amity, that Anacaona had uniformly shown to white men.

Notwithstanding all this kindness, and notwithstanding her uniform integrity of conduct, and open generosity of character, Ovando was

persuaded that Anacaona was secretly meditating a massacre of himself and his followers. Historians tell us nothing of the grounds for such a belief. It was too probably produced by the misrepresentations of the unprincipled adventurers who infested the province. Ovando should have paused and reflected before he acted upon it. He should have considered the improbability of such an attempt by naked Indians against so large a force of steel-clad troops, armed with European weapons; and he should have reflected upon the general character and conduct of Anacaona. At any rate, the example set repeatedly by Columbus and his brother the Adelantado, should have convinced him that it was a sufficient safeguard against the machinations of the natives, to seize upon their caciques and detain them as hostages. The policy of Ovando, however, was of a more rash and sanguinary nature; he acted upon suspicion as upon conviction. He determined to anticipate the alleged plot by a counter-artifice, and to overwhelm this defenceless people in an indiscriminate and bloody vengeance.

As the Indians had entertained their guests with various national games, Ovando invited them in return to witness certain games of his country. Among these was a tilting match or

joust with reeds; a chivalrous game which the Spaniards had learnt from the Moors of Granada. The Spanish cavalry, in those days, were as remarkable for their skilful management, as for the ostentatious caparison of their horses. Among the troops brought out from Spain by Ovando, one horseman had disciplined his horse to prance and curvet in time to the music of a viol.* The joust was appointed to take place of a Sunday after dinner, in the public square, before the house where Ovando was quartered. The cavalry and foot-soldiers had their secret instructions. The former were to parade, not merely with reeds or blunted tilting lances, but with weapons of a more deadly character. The foot-soldiers were to come apparently as mere spectators, but likewise armed and ready for action at a concerted signal.

At the appointed time the square was crowded with the Indians, waiting to see this military spectacle. The caciques were assembled in the house of Ovando, which looked upon the square. None were armed: an unreserved confidence prevailed among them, totally incompatible with the dark treachery of which they were accused. To prevent all suspicion, and take off all appearance of sinis-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 9.

ter designs, Ovando, after dinner, was playing at quoits with some of his principal officers when, the cavalry having arrived in the square, the caciques begged the Governor to order the joust to commence.* Anacaona and her beautiful daughter Higuenamota, with several of her female attendants, were present and joined in the request.

Ovando left his game, and came forward to a conspicuous place. When he saw that everything was disposed according to his orders, he gave the fatal signal. Some say it was by taking hold of a piece of gold which was suspended about his neck †; others, by laying his hand on the cross of Alcantara, which was embroidered on his habit. ‡ A trumpet was immediately sounded. The house in which Anacaona and all the principal caciques were assembled was surrounded by soldiery, commanded by Diego Velasquez and Rodrigo Mexiatrillo, and no one was permitted to escape. They entered, and seizing upon the caciques, bound them to the posts which supported the roof. Anacaona was led forth a prisoner. The unhappy caciques were then put to horrible tortures, until some of them, in the extremity

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. 12.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 9.

‡ Charlevoix, *Hist. San Domingo*, lib. xxiv., p. 235.

of anguish, were made to accuse their queen and themselves of the plot with which they were charged. When this cruel mockery of judicial form had been exacted, instead of preserving them for after-examination, fire was set to the house, and all the caciques perished miserably in the flames.

While these barbarities were practised upon the chieftains, a horrible massacre took place among the populace. At the signal of Ovando the horsemen rushed into the midst of the naked and defenceless throng, trampling them under the hoofs of their steeds, cutting them down with their swords, and transfixing them with their spears. No mercy was shown to age or sex; it was a savage and indiscriminate butchery. Now and then a Spanish horseman, either through an emotion of pity, or an impulse of avarice, caught up a child, to bear it off to safety; but it was barbarously pierced by the lances of his companions. Humanity turns with horror from such atrocities, and would fain discredit them, but they are circumstantially and still more minutely recorded by the venerable Bishop Las Casas, who was resident in the island at the time, and conversant with the principal actors in this tragedy. He may have colored the picture strongly, in his usual indignation when the wrongs of the Indians

are in question; yet, from all concurring accounts, and from many precise facts which speak for themselves, the scene must have been most sanguinary and atrocious. Oviedo, who is loud in extolling the justice, and devotion, and charity, and meekness of Ovando, and his kind treatment of the Indians; and who visited the province of Xaragua a few years afterwards, records several of the preceding circumstances; especially the cold-blooded game of quoits played by the Governor on the verge of such a horrible scene, and the burning of the caciques, to the number, he says, of more than forty. Diego Mendez, who was at Xaragua at the time, and doubtless present on such an important occasion, says incidentally in his last will and testament, that there were eighty-four caciques either burned or hanged.* Las Casas says that there were eighty who entered the house with Anacaona. The slaughter of the multitude must have been great; and this was inflicted on an unarmed and unresisting throng. Several who escaped from the massacre fled in their canoes to an island about eight leagues distant, called Guanabo. They were pursued and taken, and condemned to slavery.

As to the princess Anacaona, she was carried

* *Relacion hecha por Don Diego Mendez.* Navarrete, *Col.*, tom. i., p. 314.

in chains to San Domingo. The mockery of a trial was given her, in which she was found guilty on the confessions wrung by tortures from her subjects, and on the testimony of their butchers, and she was ignominiously hanged in the presence of the people whom she had so long and so signally befriended.* Oviedo has sought to throw a stigma on the character of this unfortunate princess, accusing her of great licentiousness, but he was prone to criminate the character of the native princes, who fell victims to the ingratitude and injustice of his countrymen. Contemporary writers of greater authority have concurred in representing Anacaona as remarkable for her native propriety and dignity. She was adored by her subjects, so as to hold a kind of dominion over them even during the lifetime of her brother. She is said to have been skilled in composing the *areytos*, or legendary ballads of her nation, and may have conduced much towards producing that superior degree of refinement remarked among her people. Her grace and beauty had made her renowned throughout the island, and had excited the admiration both of the savage and the Spaniard. Her magnanimous spirit was evinced in her amicable treatment of

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. 12. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 9.

the white men, although her husband, the brave Caonabo, had perished a prisoner in their hands; and defenceless parties of them had been repeatedly in her power, and lived at large in her dominions. After having for several years neglected all safe opportunities of vengeance, she fell a victim to the absurd charge of having conspired against an armed body of nearly four hundred men, seventy of them horsemen—a force sufficient to have subjugated large armies of naked Indians.

After the massacre of Xaragua the destruction of its inhabitants still continued. The favorite nephew of Anacaona, the Cacique Guaora, who had fled to the mountains, was hunted like a wild beast until he was taken and likewise hanged. For six months the Spaniards continued ravaging the country with horse and foot, under pretext of quelling insurrections, for, wherever the affrighted natives took refuge in their despair, herding in dismal caverns and in the fastnesses of the mountains, they were represented as assembling in arms to make a head of rebellion. Having at length hunted them out of their retreats, destroyed many, and reduced the survivors to the most deplorable misery and abject submission, the whole of that part of the island was considered as restored to good order, and in commemoration

of this great triumph Ovando founded a town near to the lake, which he called Santa Maria de la Verdadera Paz (St. Mary of the True Peace).*

Such is the tragical history of the delightful region of Xaragua and of its amiable and hospitable people. A place where the Europeans, by their own account, found a perfect paradise, but which, by their vile passions, they filled with horror and desolation.

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. 12.

Chapter III.

WAR WITH THE NATIVES OF HIGUEY.

[1504.]

THE subjugation of four of the Indian sovereignties of Hispaniola and the disastrous fate of their caciques have been already related. Under the administration of Ovando was also accomplished the downfall of Higuey, the last of those independent districts, a fertile province which comprised the eastern extremity of the island.

The people of Higuey were of a more warlike spirit than those of the other provinces, having learned the effectual use of their weapons from frequent contests with their Carib invaders. They were governed by a cacique named Cotabanama. Las Casas describes this chieftain from actual observation, and draws a picture of a native hero. He was, he says, the strongest of his tribe, and more perfectly formed than one man in a thousand of any nation whatever.

He was taller in stature than the tallest of his countrymen, a yard in breadth from shoulder to shoulder, and the rest of his body in admirable proportion. His aspect was not handsome but grave and courageous. His bow was not easily bent by a common man; his arrows were three-pronged, tipped with the bones of fishes, and his weapons appeared to be intended for a giant. In a word, he was so nobly proportioned as to be the admiration even of the Spaniards.

While Columbus was engaged in his fourth voyage, and shortly after the accession of Ovando to office, there was an insurrection of this cacique and his people. A shallop with eight Spaniards was surprised at the small island of Saona, adjacent to Higuey, and all the crew slaughtered. This was in revenge for the death of a cacique torn to pieces by a dog wantonly set upon him by a Spaniard, and for which the natives had in vain sued for redress.

Ovando immediately despatched Juan de Esquibel, a courageous officer, at the head of four hundred men, to quell the insurrection, and punish the massacre. Cotabanama assembled his warriors, and prepared for vigorous resistance. Distrustful of the mercy of the Spaniards, the chieftain rejected all overtures of peace, and the war was prosecuted with some advantage to the natives. The Indians

had now overcome their superstitious awe of the white men as supernatural beings, and though they could ill withstand the superiority of European arms, they manifested a courage and dexterity that rendered them enemies not to be despised. Las Casas and other historians relate a bold and romantic encounter between a single Indian and two mounted cavaliers, named Valtenebro and Portevedra, in which the Indian, though pierced through the body by the lances and swords of both his assailants, retained his fierceness, and continued the combat until he fell dead, in the possession of all their weapons.* The gallant action, says Las Casas, was public and notorious.

The Indians were soon defeated and driven to their mountain retreats. The Spaniards pursued them into their recesses, discovered their wives and children, wreaked on them the most indiscriminate slaughter, and committed their chieftains to the flames. An aged female cacique of great distinction, named Higuanama, being taken prisoner was hanged.

A detachment was sent in a caravel to the island of Saona, to take particular vengeance for the destruction of the shallop and its crew. The natives made a desperate defence and fled. The island was mountainous and full of cav-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 8.

erns, in which the Indians vainly sought for refuge. Six or seven hundred were imprisoned in a dwelling, and all put to the sword or poniarded. Those of the inhabitants who were spared were carried off as slaves, and the island was left desolate and deserted.

The natives of Higuey were driven to despair, seeing that there was no escape for them even in the bowels of the earth.* They sued for peace, which was granted them, and protection promised on condition of their cultivating a large tract of land and paying a great quantity of bread in tribute. The peace being concluded, Cotabanama visited the Spanish camp, where his gigantic proportions and material demeanor made him an object of curiosity and admiration. He was received with great distinction by Esquibel, and they exchanged names,—an Indian league of fraternity and perpetual friendship. The natives thenceforward called the Cacique Juan de Esquibel, and the Spanish commander Cotabanama. Esquibel then built a wooden fortress in an Indian village near the sea, and left in it nine men, with a captain, named Martin de Villaman. After this the troops dispersed, every man returning home with his proportion of slaves gained in this expedition.

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

The pacification was not of long continuance. About the time that succors were sent to Columbus, to rescue him from the wrecks of his vessels at Jamaica, a new revolt broke out in Higuey, in consequence of the oppressions of the Spaniards and a violation of the treaty made by Esquibel. Martin de Villaman demanded that the natives should not only raise the grain stipulated for by the treaty, but convey it to San Domingo, and he treated them with the greatest severity on their refusal. He connived also at the licentious conduct of his men towards the Indian women, the Spaniards often taking from the natives their daughters and sisters, and even their wives.* The Indians, roused at last to fury, rose on their tyrants, slaughtered them, and burnt their wooden fortress to the ground. Only one of the Spaniards escaped, and bore the tidings of this catastrophe to the city of San Domingo.

Ovando gave immediate orders to carry fire and sword into the province of Higuey. The Spanish troops mustered from various quarters on the confines of that province, when Juan de Esquibel took the command, and had a great number of Indians with him as allies. The towns of Higuey were generally built among

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

the mountains. Those mountains rose in terraces, from ten to fifteen leagues in length and breadth; rough and rocky, interspersed with glens of a red soil, remarkably fertile, where they raised their cassava bread. The ascent from the terrace was about fifty feet; steep and precipitous, formed of the living rock, and resembling a wall wrought with tools into rough diamond points. Each village had four wide streets, a stone's throw in length, forming a cross, the trees being cleared away from them, and from a public square in the centre.

When the Spanish troops arrived on the frontiers, alarm-fires along the mountains and columns of smoke spread the intelligence by night and day. The old men, the women, and children were sent off to the forests and caverns, and the warriors prepared for battle. The Castilians paused in one of the plains clear of forests, where their horses could be of use. They made prisoners of several of the natives, and tried to learn from them the plans and forces of the enemy. They applied tortures for the purpose, but in vain, so devoted was the loyalty of these people to their caciques. The Spaniards penetrated into the interior. They found the warriors of several towns assembled in one, and drawn up in the streets with their bows and arrows, but per-

fectly naked, and without defensive armor. They uttered tremendous yells, and discharged a shower of arrows, but from such a distance that they fell short of their foe. The Spaniards replied with their cross-bows, and with two or three of their arquebuses, for at this time they had but few fire-arms. When the Indians saw several of their comrades fall dead they took to flight, rarely waiting for the attack with swords. Some of the wounded, in whose bodies the arrows from the cross-bows had penetrated to the very feather, drew them out with their hands, broke them with their teeth, and hurling them at the Spaniards with impotent fury, fell dead upon the spot.

The whole force of the Indians was routed and dispersed; each family, or band of neighbors, fled in its own direction, and concealed itself in the fastnesses of the mountains. The Spaniards pursued them, but found the chase difficult amidst the close forests, and the broken and stony heights. They took several prisoners as guides, and inflicted incredible torments on them, to compel them to betray their countrymen. They drove them before them, secured by cords fastened round their necks; and some of them, as they passed along the brinks of precipices, suddenly threw themselves headlong down, in hopes of dragging

after them the Spaniards. When at length the pursuers came upon the unhappy Indians in their concealments, they spared neither age nor sex; even pregnant women, and mothers with infants in their arms, fell beneath their merciless swords. The cold-blooded acts of cruelty which followed this first slaughter would be shocking to relate.

Hence Esquibel marched to attack the town where Cotabanama resided, and where that cacique had collected a great force to resist him. He proceeded direct for the place along the sea-coast, and came to where two roads led up the mountain to the town. One of the roads was open and inviting, the branches of the trees being lopped, and all the underwood cleared away. Here the Indians had stationed an ambuscade to take the Spaniards in the rear. The other road was almost closed up by trees and bushes cut down and thrown across each other. Esquibel was wary and distrustful; he suspected the stratagem, and chose the encumbered road. The town was about a league and a half from the sea. The Spaniards made their way with great difficulty for the first half league. The rest of the way was free from all embarrassment, which confirmed their suspicion of a stratagem. They now advanced with great rapidity, and, having

arrived near the village, suddenly turned into the other road, took the party in ambush by surprise, and made great havoc among them with their cross-bows.

The warriors now sallied from their concealment, others rushed out of the houses into the streets, and discharged flights of arrows, but from such a distance as generally to fall harmless. They then approached nearer, and hurled stones with their hands, being unacquainted with the use of slings. Instead of being dismayed at seeing their companions fall, it rather increased their fury. An irregular battle, probably little else than wild skirmishing and bush-fighting, was kept up from two o'clock in the afternoon until night. Las Casas was present on the occasion, and, from his account, the Indians must have shown instances of great personal bravery, though the inferiority of their weapons, and the want of all defensive armor, rendered their valor totally ineffectual. As the evening shut in, their hostilities gradually ceased, and they disappeared in the profound gloom and close thickets of the surrounding forest. A deep silence succeeded to their yells and war-whoops, and throughout the night the Spaniards remained in undisturbed possession of the village.

Chapter IV.

CLOSE OF THE WAR WITH HIGUEY—FATE OF COTABANAMA.

[1504.]

ON the morning after the battle not an Indian was to be seen. Finding that even their great chief, Cotabanama, was incapable of vying with the prowess of the white men, they had given up the contest in despair, and fled to the mountains. The Spaniards separating into small parties, hunted them with the utmost diligence; their object was to seize the caciques, and, above all, Cotabanama. They explored all the glens and concealed paths leading into the wild recesses where the fugitives had taken refuge. The Indians were cautious and stealthy in their mode of retreating, treading in each other's foot-prints, so that twenty would make no more track than one, and stepping so lightly as scarce to disturb the

herbage ; yet there were Spaniards so skilled in hunting Indians, that they could trace them even by the turn of a withered leaf, and among the confused tracks of a thousand animals.

They could scent afar off, also, the smoke of the fires which the Indians made whenever they halted, and thus they would come upon them in their most secret haunts. Sometimes they would hunt down a straggling Indian, and compel him by torments to betray the hiding-place of his companions, binding him and driving him before them as a guide. Whenever they discovered one of these places of refuge, filled with the aged and the infirm, with feeble women and helpless children, they massacred them without mercy. They wished to inspire terror throughout the land, and to frighten the whole tribe into submission. They cut off the hands of those whom they took roving at large, and sent them, as they said, to deliver them as letters to their friends, demanding their surrender. Numberless were those, says Las Casas, whose hands were amputated in this manner, and many of them sank down and died by the way, through anguish and loss of blood.*

The conquerors delighted in exercising strange and ingenious cruelties. They min-

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 17, MS.

gled horrible levity with their blood-thirstiness. They erected gibbets long and low, so that the feet of the sufferers might reach the ground, and their death be lingering. They hanged thirteen together, in reverence, says the indignant Las Casas, of our blessed Saviour and the twelve apostles. While their victims were suspended, and still living, they hacked them with their swords, to prove the strength of their arm and the edge of their weapons. They wrapped them in dry straw, and setting fire to it, terminated their existence by the fiercest agony.

These are horrible details, yet a veil is drawn over others still more detestable. They are related circumstantially by Las Casas, who was an eye-witness. He was young at the time, but records them in his advanced years. "All these things," said the venerable Bishop, "and others revolting to human nature, did my own eyes behold ; and now I almost fear to repeat them, scarce believing myself, or whether I have not dreamt them."

These details would have been withheld from the present work as disgraceful to human nature, and from an unwillingness to advance anything which might convey a stigma upon a brave and generous nation. But it would be a departure from historical veracity, having the documents before my eyes, to pass silently over

transactions so atrocious, and vouched for by witnesses beyond all suspicion of falsehood. Such occurrences show the extremity to which human cruelty may extend, when stimulated by avidity of gain, by a thirst of vengeance, or even by a perverted zeal in the holy cause of religion. Every nation has in turn furnished proofs of this disgraceful truth. As in the present instance, they are commonly the crimes of individuals rather than of the nation. Yet it behooves governments to keep a vigilant eye upon those to whom they delegate power in remote and helpless colonies. It is the imperious duty of the historian to place these matters upon record, that they may serve as warning beacons to future generations.

Juan de Esquibel found that, with all his severities, it would be impossible to subjugate the tribe of Higuey, as long as the Cacique Cotabanama was at large. That chieftain had retired to the little island of Saona, about two leagues from the coast of Higuey, in the centre of which, amidst a labyrinth of rocks and forests, he had taken shelter with his wife and children in a vast cavern.

A caravel, recently arrived from the city of San Domingo with supplies for the camp, was employed by Esquibel to entrap the Cacique. He knew that the latter kept a vigilant look-

out, stationing scouts upon the lofty rocks of his island to watch the movements of the caravel. Esquibel departed by night therefore in the vessel, with fifty followers, and keeping under the deep shadows cast by the land, arrived at Saona unperceived, at the dawn of morning. Here he anchored close in with the shore, hid by cliffs and forests, and landed forty men, before the spies of Cotabanama had taken their station. Two of these were surprised and brought to Esquibel, who, having learnt from them that the Cacique was at hand, poniarded one of the spies, and bound the other, making him serve as guide.

A number of Spaniards ran in advance, each anxious to signalize himself by the capture of the Cacique. They came to two roads, and the whole party pursued that to the right, excepting one Juan Lopez, a powerful man, skilled in Indian warfare. He proceeded in a footpath to the left, winding among little hills, so thickly wooded, that it was impossible to see any one at the distance of half a bow-shot. Suddenly, in a narrow pass, overshadowed by rocks and trees, he encountered twelve Indian warriors, armed with bows and arrows, and following each other in single file according to their custom. The Indians were confounded at the sight of Lopez, imagining that there must be a

party of soldiers behind him. They might readily have transfixed him with their arrows, but they had lost all presence of mind. He demanded their chieftain. They replied that he was behind, and, opening to let him pass, Lopez beheld the Cacique in the rear. At sight of the Spaniard, Cotabanama bent his gigantic bow, and was on the point of launching one of his three-pronged arrows, but Lopez rushed upon him and wounded him with his sword. The other Indians, struck with panic, had already fled. Cotabanama, dismayed at the keenness of the sword, cried out that he was Juan de Esquibel, claiming respect as having exchanged names with the Spanish commander. Lopez seized him with one hand by the hair, and with the other aimed a thrust at his body; but the Cacique struck down the sword with his hand, and grappling with his antagonist, threw him with his back upon the rocks. As they were both men of great power, the struggle was long and violent. The sword was beneath them, but Cotabanama, seizing the Spaniard by the throat with his mighty hand, attempted to strangle him. The sound of the contest brought the other Spaniards to the spot. They found their companion writhing and gasping, and almost dead, in the gripe of the gigantic Indian. They seized the Cacique,

bound him, and carried him captive to a deserted Indian village in the vicinity. They found the way to his secret cave, but his wife and children having received notice of his capture by the fugitive Indians, had taken refuge in another part of the island. In the cavern was found the chain with which a number of Indian captives had been bound, who had risen upon and slain three Spaniards who had them in charge, and had made their escape to this island. There were also the swords of the same Spaniards, which they had brought off as trophies to their cacique. The chain was now employed to manacle Cotabanama.

The Spaniards prepared to execute the chieftain on the spot, in the centre of the deserted village. For this purpose a pyre was built of logs of wood laid crossways, in form of a gridiron, on which he was to be slowly broiled to death. On further consultation however they were induced to forego the pleasure of this horrible sacrifice. Perhaps they thought the Cacique too important a personage to be executed thus obscurely. Granting him therefore a transient reprieve, they conveyed him to the caravel, and sent him, bound with heavy chains, to San Domingo. Ovando saw him in his power, and incapable of doing further harm; but he had not the magnanimity to forgive a

fallen enemy, whose only crime was the defence of his native soil and lawful territory. He ordered him to be publicly hanged like a common culprit.* In this ignominious manner was the Cacique Cotabanama executed, the last of the five sovereign princes of Hayti. His death was followed by the complete subjugation of his people, and sealed the last struggle of the natives against their oppressors. The island was almost unpeopled of its original inhabitants, and meek and mournful submission and mute despair settled upon the scanty remnant that survived.

Such was the ruthless system which had been pursued, during the absence of the Admiral, by the commander Ovando—this man of boasted prudence and moderation, who was sent to reform the abuses of the island, and above all, to redress the wrongs of the natives. The system of Columbus may have borne hard upon the Indians, born and brought up in untasked freedom, but it was never cruel or sanguinary. He inflicted no wanton massacres nor vindictive punishments; his desire was to cherish and civilize the Indians, and to render them useful subjects; not to oppress, and persecute, and destroy them. When he beheld the desolation that had swept them from the

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 18.

land during his suspension from authority, he could not restrain the strong expression of his feelings. In a letter written to the King after his return to Spain, he thus expresses himself on the subject:

"The Indians of Hispaniola were and are the riches of the island; for it is they who cultivate and make the bread and the provisions for the Christians; who dig the gold from the mines, and perform all the offices and labors both of men and beasts. I am informed that, since I left this island, six parts out of seven of the natives are dead; all through ill-treatment and inhumanity; some by the sword, others by blows and cruel usage, others through hunger. The greater part have perished in the mountains and glens, whither they had fled, from not being able to support the labor imposed upon them."

For his own part, he added, although he had sent many Indians to Spain to be sold, it was always with a view to their being instructed in the Christian faith, and in civilized arts and usages, and afterwards sent back to their island to assist in civilizing their countrymen.*

The brief view that has been given of the policy of Ovando on certain points on which Columbus was censured, may enable the reader to judge more correctly of the conduct of the latter. It is not to be measured by the stand-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 36.

ard of right and wrong established in the present more enlightened age. We must consider him in connection with the era in which he lived. By comparing his measures with those men of his own times praised for their virtues and abilities, placed in precisely his own situation, and placed there especially to correct his faults, we shall be the better able to judge how virtuously and wisely, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, he may be considered to have governed.

Book XVIII.

Chapter I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FOR SAN DOMINGO—HIS RETURN TO SPAIN.

[1504.]

THE arrival at Jamaica of the two vessels under the command of Salcedo, had caused a joyful reverse in the situation of Columbus. He hastened to leave the wreck in which he had been so long immured, and hoisting his flag on board of one of the ships, felt as if the career of enterprise and glory was once more open to him. The late partisans of Porras, when they heard of the arrival of the ships, came wistful and abject to the harbor, doubting how far they might trust to the magnanimity of a man whom they had so greatly injured, and who had now an opportunity of vengeance. The generous mind, however, never harbors revenge in the hour of returning prosperity; but feels noble satisfaction in sharing its hap-

piness even with its enemies. Columbus forgot, in his present felicity, all that he had suffered from these men. He ceased to consider them enemies, now that they had lost the power to injure; and he not only fulfilled all that he had promised them, by taking them on board the ships, but relieved their necessities from his own purse, until their return to Spain; and afterwards took unwearied pains to recommend them to the bounty of the sovereigns. Francisco Porras alone continued a prisoner, to be tried by the tribunals of his country.

Oviedo assures us that the Indians wept when they beheld the departure of the Spaniards, still considering them as beings from the skies. From the Admiral, it is true, they had experienced nothing but just and gentle treatment, and continual benefits; and the idea of his immediate influence with the Deity, manifested on the memorable occasion of the eclipse, may have made them consider him as more than human, and his presence as propitious to their island; but it is not easy to believe that a lawless gang like that of Porras's could have been ranging for months among their villages, without giving cause for the greatest joy at their departure.

On the 28th of June the vessels set sail for

San Domingo. The adverse winds and currents which had opposed Columbus throughout this ill-starred expedition, still continued to harass him. After a weary struggle of several weeks, he reached, on the 3d of August, the little island of Beata, on the coast of Hispaniola. Between this place and San Domingo the currents are so violent, that vessels are often detained months, waiting for sufficient wind to enable them to stem the stream. Hence Columbus despatched a letter by land to Ovando, to inform him of his approach, and to remove certain absurd suspicions of his views, which he had learned from Salcedo were still entertained by the Governor, who feared his arrival in the island might produce factions and disturbances. In this letter he expresses, with his usual warmth and simplicity, the joy he felt at his deliverance, which was so great, he says, that since the arrival of Diego de Salcedo with succor he had scarcely been able to sleep. The letter had barely time to precede the writer, for, a favorable wind springing up, the vessels again made sail, and on the 13th of August anchored in the harbor of San Domingo.

If it is the lot of prosperity to awaken envy and excite detraction, it is certainly the lot of misfortune to atone for a multitude of faults.

San Domingo had been the very hot-bed of sedition against Columbus in the day of his power; he had been hurried from it in ignominious chains, amidst the shouts and taunts of the triumphant rabble; he had been excluded from its harbor when, as commander of a squadron, he craved shelter from an impending tempest; but now that he arrived in its waters, a broken down and shipwrecked man, all past hostility was overpowered by the popular sense of his late disasters. There was a momentary burst of enthusiasm in his favor; what had been denied to his merits was granted to his misfortunes; and even the envious, appeased by his present reverses, seemed to forgive him for having once been so triumphant.

The Governor and principal inhabitants came forth to meet him, and received hin with signal distinction. He was lodged as a guest in the house of Ovando, who treated him with the utmost courtesy and attention. The Governor was a shrewd and discreet man, and much of a courtier; but there were causes of jealousy and distrust between him and Columbus too deep to permit of cordial intercourse. The Admiral and his son Fernando always pronounced the civility of Ovando overstrained and hypocritical; intended to obliterate the

remembrance of past neglect, and to conceal lurking enmity. While he professed the utmost friendship and sympathy for the Admiral, he set at liberty the traitor Porras, who was still a prisoner to be taken to Spain for trial. He also talked of punishing those of the Admiral's people who had taken arms in his defence, and in the affray at Jamaica had killed several of the mutineers. These circumstances were loudly complained of by Columbus; but, in fact, they rose out of a question of jurisdiction between him and the Governor. Their powers were so undefined as to clash with each other, and they were both disposed to be extremely punctilious. Ovando assumed a right to take cognizance of all transactions at Jamaica, as happening within the limits of his government, which included all the islands and Terra Firma. Columbus, on the other hand, asserted the absolute command, and the jurisdiction both civil and criminal given to him by the sovereigns, over all persons who sailed in his expedition, from the time of departure until their return to Spain. To prove this, he produced his letter of instructions. The Governor heard him with great courtesy and a smiling countenance; but observed that the letter of instructions gave him no authority within the

bounds of his government.* He relinquished the idea, however, of investigating the conduct of the followers of Columbus, and sent Porras to Spain, to be examined by the board which had charge of the affairs of the Indies.

The sojourn of Columbus at San Domingo was but little calculated to yield him satisfaction. He was grieved at the desolation of the island by the oppressive treatment of the natives, and the horrible massacre which had been perpetrated by Ovando and his agents. He had fondly hoped, at one time, to render the natives civilized, industrious, and tributary subjects to the Crown, and to derive from their well-regulated labor a great and steady revenue. How different had been the event! The five great tribes which peopled the mountains and the valleys at the time of the discovery, and rendered, by their mingled towns and villages and tracts of civilization, the rich levels of the Vega so many "painted gardens," had almost all passed away, and the native princes had perished chiefly by violent or ignominious deaths. Columbus regarded the affairs of the island with a different eye from Ovando. He had a paternal feeling for its prosperity, and his fortunes were implicated

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego, Seville, November 21, 1504. Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

in its judicious management. He complained, in subsequent letters to the sovereigns, that all the public affairs were ill-conducted ; that the ore collected lay unguarded in large quantities in houses slightly built and thatched, inviting depredation ; that Ovando was unpopular, the people were dissolute, and the property of the Crown and the security of the island in continual risk from mutiny and sedition.* While he saw all this, he had no power to interfere, and any observation or remonstrance on his part was ill received by the Governor.

He found his own immediate concerns in great confusion. His rents and dues were either uncollected, or he could not obtain a clear account and a full liquidation of them. Whatever he could collect was appropriated to the fitting out of the vessels which were to convey himself and his crews to Spain. He accuses Ovando, in his subsequent letters, of having neglected, if not sacrificed, his interests during his long absence, and of having impeded those who were appointed to attend to his concerns. That he had some grounds for these complaints would appear from two letters still extant,† written by Queen Isabella to Ovando, on the

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego, dated Seville, December 3, 1504. Navarrete, tom. i., p. 341.

† Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. ii., decad. 151, 152.

27th of November, 1503, in which she informs him of the complaint of Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, that he was impeded in collecting the rents of the Admiral; and expressly commands Ovando to observe the capitulations granted to Columbus; to respect his agents, and to facilitate, instead of obstructing his concerns. These letters, while they imply ungenerous conduct on the part of the Governor towards his illustrious predecessor, evince likewise the personal interest taken by Isabella in the affairs of Columbus during his absence. She had, in fact, signified her displeasure at his being excluded from the port of San Domingo, when he applied there for succor for his squadron, and for shelter from a storm; and had censured Ovando for not taking his advice and detaining the fleet of Bobadilla, by which it would have escaped its disastrous fate.* And here it may be observed, that the sanguinary acts of Ovando towards the natives, in particular the massacre at Xaragua and the execution of the unfortunate Anacaona, awakened equal horror and indignation in Isabella; she was languishing on her death-bed when she received the intelligence, and with her dying breath she exacted a promise from King Ferdinand that Ovando should immediately be recalled from his govern-

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. v., cap. 12.

ment. The promise was tardily and reluctantly fulfilled, after an interval of about four years, and not until induced by other circumstances; for Ovando contrived to propitiate the monarch, by forcing a revenue from the island.

The continued misunderstandings between the Admiral and the Governor, though always qualified on the part of the latter with great complaisance, induced Columbus to hasten as much as possible his departure from the island. The ship in which he had returned from Jamaica was repaired and fitted out, and put under the command of the Adelantado; another vessel was freighted, in which Columbus embarked with his son and his domestics. The greater part of his late crews remained at San Domingo; as they were in great poverty, he relieved their necessities from his own purse, and advanced the funds necessary for the voyage home of those who chose to return. Many thus relieved by his generosity had been among the most violent of the rebels.

On the 12th of September he set sail; but had scarcely left the harbor when, in a sudden squall, the mast of his ship was carried away. He immediately went with his family on board of the vessel commanded by the Adelantado, and sending back the damaged ship to port, continued on his course. Throughout the voyage

he experienced the most tempestuous weather. In one storm the mainmast was sprung in four places. He was confined to his bed at the time by the gout. By his advice, however, and the activity of the Adelantado, the damage was skilfully repaired ; the mast was shortened, the weak parts were fortified by wood taken from the castles or cabins, which the vessels in those days carried on the prow and stern, and the whole was well secured by cords. They were still more damaged in a succeeding tempest, in which the ship sprung her foremast. In this crippled state they had to traverse seven hundred leagues of a stormy ocean. Fortune continued to persecute Columbus to the end of this, his last and most disastrous expedition. For several weeks he was tempest-tost —suffering at the same time the most excruciating pains from his malady—until, on the 7th day of November, his crazy and shattered bark anchored in the harbor of San Lucar. Hence he had himself conveyed to Seville, where he hoped to enjoy repose of mind and body, and to recruit his health after such a long series of fatigues, anxieties, and hardships.*

* *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 108. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 36.

Chapter VI.

ILLNESS OF COLUMBUS AT SEVILLE—APPLICATION TO THE CROWN FOR A RESTITUTION OF HIS HONORS—DEATH OF ISABELLA.

[1504.]

BROKEN by age and infirmities, and worn down by the toils and hardships of his recent expedition, Columbus had looked forward to Seville as a haven of rest, where he might repose awhile from his troubles. Care and sorrow however followed him by sea and land. In varying the scene he but varied the nature of his distress. "Wearisome days and nights" were appointed to him for the remainder of his life; and the very margin of his grave was destined to be strewed with thorns.

On arriving at Seville, he found all his affairs in confusion. Ever since he had been sent home in chains from San Domingo, when his house and effects had been taken possession of by

Bobadilla, his rents and dues had never been properly collected; and such as had been gathered had been retained in the hands of the Governor, Ovando. "I have much vexation from the Governor," says he, in a letter to his son Diego.* "All tell me that I have there eleven or twelve thousand *castellanos;* and I have not received a *quarto*. . . . I know well, that, since my departure, he must have received upwards of five thousand *castellanos*." He entreated that a letter might be written by the King commanding the payment of these arrears without delay; for his agents would not venture even to speak to Ovando on the subject, unless empowered by a letter from the sovereign.

Columbus was not of a mercenary spirit; but his rank and situation required large expenditure. The world thought him in the possession of sources of inexhaustible wealth; but, as yet, those sources had furnished him but precarious and scanty streams. His last voyage had exhausted his finances, and involved him in perplexities. All that he had been able to collect of the money due to him in Hispaniola, to the amount of twelve hundred *castellanos*, had been expended in bringing home many of his late crew, who were in distress; and for the greater

* Letter, Seville, December 13, 1504. Navarrete, vol. i., p. 343.

part of the sum the Crown remained his debtor. While struggling to obtain his mere pecuniary dues, he was absolutely suffering a degree of penury. He repeatedly urges the necessity of economy to his son Diego, until he can obtain a restitution of his property, and the payment of his arrears. "I received nothing of the revenue due to me," says he, in one letter; "I live by borrowing." "Little have I profited," he adds in another, "by twenty years of service, with such toils and perils; since, at present, I do not own a roof in Spain. If I desire to eat or sleep, I have no resort but an inn; and, for the most times, have not wherewithal to pay my bill."

Yet in the midst of these personal distresses he was more solicitous for the payment of his seamen than of himself. He wrote strongly and repeatedly to the sovereigns, entreating the discharge of their arrears, and urged his son Diego, who was at court, to exert himself in their behalf. "They are poor," said he, "and it is now nearly three years since they left their homes. They have endured infinite toils and perils, and they bring invaluable tidings, for which their Majesties ought to give thanks to God and rejoice." Notwithstanding his generous solicitude for these men, he knew several of them to have been his enemies; nay, that

some of them were at this very time disposed to do him harm rather than good; such was the magnanimity of his spirit and his forgiving disposition.

The same zeal, also, for the interests of his sovereigns, which had ever actuated his loyal mind, mingled with his other causes of solicitude. He represented in his letter to the King the mismanagement of the royal rents in Hispaniola, under the administration of Ovando. Immense quantities of ore lay unprotected in slightly built houses, and liable to depredations. It required a person of vigor, and one who had an individual interest in the property of the island, to restore its affairs to order and draw from it the immense revenues which it was capable of yielding; and Columbus plainly intimated that he was the proper person.

In fact, as to himself, it was not so much pecuniary indemnification that he sought, as the restoration of his offices and dignities. He regarded them as the trophies of his illustrious achievements. He had received the royal promise that he should be reinstated in them; and he felt that as long as they were withheld, a tacit censure rested upon his name. Had he not been proudly impatient on this subject he would have belied the loftiest part of his character; for he who can be indifferent to the

wreath of triumph, is deficient in the noble ambition which incites to glorious deeds.

The unsatisfactory replies received to his letters disquieted his mind. He knew that he had active enemies at court ready to turn all things to his disadvantage, and felt the importance of being there in person to defeat their machinations; but his infirmities detained him at Seville. He made an attempt to set forth on the journey, but the severity of the winter and the virulence of his malady obliged him to relinquish it in despair. All that he could do was to reiterate his letters to the sovereigns, and to entreat the intervention of his few, but faithful friends. He feared the disastrous occurrences of the last voyage might be represented to his prejudice. The great object of the expedition, the discovery of a strait opening from the Caribbean to a southern sea, had failed. The secondary object, the acquisition of gold, had not been completed. He had discovered the gold mines of Veragua, it is true; but he had brought home no treasure; because, as he said, in one of his letters, "I would not rob nor outrage the country; since reason requires that it should be settled, and then the gold may be procured without violence."

He was especially apprehensive that the violent scenes in the island of Jamaica might, by

the perversity of his enemies, and the effrontery of the delinquents, be wrested into matters of accusation against him, as had been the case with the rebellion of Roldan. Porras, the ringleader of the late faction, had been sent home by Ovando, to appear before the Board of the Indies; but without any written process setting forth the offences charged against him. While at Jamaica, Columbus had ordered an inquest of the affair to be taken; but the notary of the squadron who took it, and the papers which he drew up, were on board of the ship in which the Admiral had sailed from Hispaniola, which had put back dismasted. No cognizance of the case, therefore, was taken by the Council of the Indies; and Porras went at large, armed with the power and disposition to do mischief. Being related to Morales, the royal treasurer, he had access to people in place, and an opportunity of enlisting their opinions and prejudices on his side. Columbus wrote to Morales, enclosing a copy of the petition which the rebels had sent to him when in Jamaica, in which they acknowledged their culpability, and implored his forgiveness; and he entreated the treasurer not to be swayed by the representations of his relatives, nor to pronounce an opinion unfavorable to him, until he had an opportunity of being heard.

The faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez was at this time at the court, as well as Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, and an active friend of Columbus named Geronimo. They could bear the most important testimony as to his conduct, and he wrote to his son Diego to call upon them for their good offices. "I trust," said he, "that the truth and diligence of Diego Mendez will be of as much avail as the lies of Porras." Nothing can surpass the affecting earnestness and simplicity of the general declaration of loyalty, contained in one of his letters. "I have served their Majesties," says he, "with as much zeal and diligence as if it had been to gain Paradise; and if I have failed in anything, it has been because my knowledge and powers went no further."

While reading these touching appeals, we can scarcely realize the fact, that the dejected individual thus wearily and vainly applying for unquestionable rights, and pleading almost like a culprit, in cases wherein he had been flagrantly injured, was the same who but a few years previously had been received at this very court with almost regal honors, and idolized as a national benefactor; that this, in a word, was Columbus, the discoverer of the New World; broken in health, and impoverished in his old days by his very discoveries.

At length the caravel bringing the official proceedings relative to the brothers Porras arrived at the Algarves, in Portugal, and Columbus looked forward with hope that all matters would soon be placed in a proper light. His anxiety to get to court became every day more intense. A litter was provided to convey him thither, and was actually at the door, but the inclemency of the weather and his increasing infirmities obliged him again to abandon the journey. His resource of letter-writing began to fail him: he could only write at night, for in the daytime the severity of his malady deprived him of the use of his hands. The tidings from the court were every day more and more adverse to his hopes; the intrigues of his enemies were prevailing; the cold-hearted Ferdinand treated all his applications with indifference; the generous Isabella lay dangerously ill. On her justice and magnanimity he still relied for the full restoration of his rights and the redress of all his grievances. "May it please the Holy Trinity," says he, "to restore our sovereign queen to health; for by her will everything be adjusted which is now in confusion." Alas! while writing that letter, his noble benefactress was a corpse!

The health of Isabella had long been undermined by the shocks of repeated domestic ca-

lamities. The death of her only son, the Prince Juan, of her beloved daughter and bosom friend, the Princess Isabella, and of her grandson and prospective heir, the Prince Miguel, had been three cruel wounds to a heart full of the tenderest sensibility. To these was added the constant grief caused by the evident infirmity of intellect of her daughter Juana, and the domestic unhappiness of that princess with her husband the Archduke Philip. The desolation which walks through palaces admits not the familiar sympathies and sweet consolations which alleviate the sorrows of common life. Isabella pined in state, amidst the obsequious homages of a court, surrounded by the trophies of a glorious and successful reign, and placed at the summit of earthly grandeur. A deep and incurable melancholy settled upon her, which undermined her constitution, and gave a fatal acuteness to her bodily maladies. After four months of illness, she died on the 26th of November, 1504, at Medina del Campo, in the fifty-fourth year of her age; but long before her eyes closed upon the world, her heart had closed on all its pomps and vanities.

"Let my body," said she in her will, "be interred in the monastery of San Francisco, which is in the Alhambra of the city of Granada, in a low sepulchre, without any monument except a plain stone, with the

inscription cut on it. But I desire and command, that if the King, my lord, should choose a sepulchre in any church or monastery in any other part or place of these my kingdoms, my body be transported thither, and buried beside the body of his Highness, so that the union we have enjoyed while living, and which, through the mercy of God, we hope our souls will experience in Heaven, may be represented by our bodies in the earth." *

Such was one of several passages in the will of this admirable woman, which bespoke the chastened humility of her heart; and in which, as has been observed, the affections of conjugal love were delicately entwined with piety, and with the most tender melancholy.† She was one of the purest spirits that ever ruled over the destinies of a nation. Had she been spared, her benignant vigilance would have prevented many a scene of horror in the colonization of the New World, and might have softened the lot of its native inhabitants. As it is, her

* The dying command of Isabella has been obeyed. The author of this work has seen her tomb in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Granada, in which her remains are interred with those of Ferdinand. Their effigies, sculptured in white marble, lie side by side on a magnificent sepulchre. The altar of the chapel is adorned with bas-reliefs representing the conquest and surrender of Granada.

† *Elogia de la Reina Catolica.* Por D. Diego Clemencin. Illustration 19.

fair name will ever shine with celestial radiance in the dawning of its history.

TOMB OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA, GRANADA.

The news of the death of Isabella reached Columbus when he was writing a letter to his son Diego. He notices it in a postscript or

memorandum, written in the haste and brevity of the moment, but in beautifully touching and mournful terms.

"A memorial," he writes, "for thee, my dear son Diego, of what is at present to be done. The principal thing is to commend affectionately, and with great devotion, the soul of the Queen our sovereign to God. Her life was always Catholic and holy, and prompt to all things in His holy service: for this reason we may rest assured that she is received into His glory, and beyond the care of this rough and weary world. The next thing is to watch and labor in all matters for the service of our sovereign the King, and to endeavor to alleviate his grief. His majesty is the head of Christendom. Remember the proverb which says, when the head suffers, all the members suffer. Therefore all good Christians should pray for his health and long life; and we, who are in his employ, ought more than others to do this with all study and diligence." *

It is impossible to read this mournful letter without being moved by the simply eloquent yet artless language in which Columbus expressed his tenderness for the memory of his benefactress, his weariness under the gathering cares and ills of life, and his persevering and enduring loyalty towards the sovereign who was so ungratefully neglecting him. It is in these unstudied and confidential letters that we read the heart of Columbus.

* Letter to his son Diego, December 3, 1504.

Chapter III.

COLUMBUS ARRIVES AT COURT—FRUITLESS APPLICATION TO THE KING FOR REDRESS.

[1505.]

THE death of Isabella was a fatal blow to the fortunes of Columbus. While she lived he had everything to anticipate from her high sense of justice, her regard for her royal word, her gratitude for his services, and her admiration of his character. With her illness, however, his interest had languished, and when she died he was left to the justice and generosity of Ferdinand!

During the remainder of the winter and a part of the spring, he continued at Seville, detained by painful illness, and endeavoring to obtain redress from the government by ineffectual letters. His brother the Adelantado, who supported him with his accustomed fondness and devotion through all his trials, proceeded

to court to attend to his interests, taking with him the Admiral's youngest son, Fernando, then aged about seventeen. The latter, the affectionate father repeatedly represents to his son Diego as a man in understanding and conduct, though but a stripling in years; and inculcates the strongest fraternal attachment, alluding to his own brethren with one of those simply eloquent and affecting expressions which stamp his heart upon his letters. "To thy brother conduct thyself as the elder brother should unto the younger. Thou hast no other, and I praise God that this is such a one as thou dost need. Ten brothers would not be too many for thee. Never have I found a better friend to right or left, than my brothers."

Among the persons whom Columbus employed at this time in his missions to the court, was Amerigo Vespucci. He describes him as a worthy but unfortunate man, who had not profited as much as he deserved by his undertakings, and who had always been disposed to render him service. His object in employing him appears to have been to prove the value of his last voyage, and that he had been in the most opulent parts of the New World; Vespucci having since touched upon the same coast, in a voyage with Alonso de Ojeda.

One circumstance occurred at this time which

shed a gleam of hope and consolation over his gloomy prospects. Diego de Deza, who had been for some time bishop of Palencia, was expected at Court. This was the same worthy friar who had aided him to advocate his theory before the board of learned men at Salamanca, and had assisted him with his purse when making his proposals to the Spanish Court. He had just been promoted and made Archbishop of Seville, but had not yet been installed in office. Columbus directs his son Diego to intrust his interests to this worthy prelate. "Two things," says he, "require particular attention. Ascertain whether the Queen, who is now with God, has said anything concerning me in her testament, and stimulate the Bishop of Palencia, he who was the cause that their Highnesses obtained possession of the Indies, who induced me to remain in Castile when I was on the road to leave it."* In another letter he says: "If the bishop of Palencia has arrived, or should arrive, tell him how much I have been gratified by his prosperity, and that if I come, I shall lodge with His Grace, even though he should not invite me, for we must return to our ancient fraternal affection."

* Letter of December 21, 1504, Navarrete, tom. i., p. 346.

The incessant applications of Columbus, both by letter and by the intervention of friends, appear to have been listened to with cool indifference. No compliance was yielded to his request, and no deference was paid to his opinions, on various points, concerning which he interested himself. New instructions were sent out to Ovando, but not a word of their purport was mentioned to the Admiral. It was proposed to send out three bishops, and he entreated in vain to be heard previous to their election. In short, he was not in any way consulted in the affairs of the New World. He felt deeply this neglect, and became every day more impatient of his absence from court. To enable himself to perform the journey with more ease, he applied for permission to use a mule, a royal ordinance having prohibited the employment of those animals under the saddle, in consequence of their universal use having occasioned a decline in the breed of horses. A royal permission was accordingly granted to Columbus, in consideration that his age and infirmities incapacitated him from riding on horseback; but it was a considerable time before the state of his health would permit him to avail himself of that privilege.

The foregoing particulars, gleaned from letters of Columbus recently discovered, show

the real state of his affairs, and the mental and bodily affliction sustained by him during his winter's residence at Seville, on his return from his last disastrous voyage. He has generally been represented as reposing there from his toils and troubles. Never was honorable repose more merited, more desired, and less enjoyed.

It was not until the month of May that he was able, in company with his brother the Adelantado, to accomplish his journey to court, at that time held at Segovia. He, who but a few years before had entered the city of Barcelona in triumph, attended by the nobility and chivalry of Spain, and hailed with rapture by the multitude, now arrived within the gates of Segovia, a wayworn, melancholy, and neglected man; oppressed more by sorrow than even by his years and infirmities. When he presented himself at court, he met with none of that distinguished attention, that cordial kindness, that cherishing sympathy, which his unparalleled services and his recent sufferings had merited.*

The selfish Ferdinand had lost sight of his past services in what appeared to him the inconvenience of his present demands. He re-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 37. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. vi., cap. 13.

ceived him with many professions of kindness; but with those cold, ineffectual smiles, which pass like wintry sunshine over the countenance, and convey no warmth to the heart.

The Admiral now gave a particular account of his late voyage; describing the great tract of Terra Firma which he had explored, and the riches of the province of Veragua. He related also the disasters sustained in the island of Jamaica; the insurrection of the Porras and their band, and all the other griefs and troubles of this unfortunate expedition. He had but a cold-hearted auditor in the King; and the benignant Isabella was no more at hand to soothe him with a smile of kindness, or a tear of sympathy.

"I know not," says the venerable Las Casas, "what would cause this dislike and this want of princely countenance in the King, towards one who had rendered him such pre-eminent benefits; unless it was that his mind was swayed by the false testimonies which had been brought against the Admiral; of which I have been enabled to learn something from persons much in favor with the sovereigns." *

After a few days elapsed Columbus urged his suit in form; reminding the King of all that he had done, and all that had been promised him under the royal word and seal, and

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 39, MS.

supplicating that the restitutions and indemnifications which had been so frequently solicited, might be awarded to him; offering in return to serve his Majesty devotedly for the short time he had yet to live; and trusting, from what he felt within him, and from what he thought he knew with certainty, to render services which should surpass all that he had yet performed a hundred-fold. The King, in reply, acknowledged the greatness of his merits and the importance of his services, but observed, that, for the more satisfactory adjustment of his claims, it would be advisable to refer all points in dispute to the decision of some discreet and able person. The Admiral immediately proposed as arbiter his friend the Archbishop of Seville, Don Diego de Deza, one of the most able and upright men about the court, devotedly loyal, high in the confidence of the King, and one who had always taken great interest in the affairs of the New World. The King consented to the arbitration, but artfully extended it to questions which he knew would never be put at issue by Columbus; among these was his claim to the restoration of his office of viceroy. To this Columbus objected with becoming spirit, as compromising a right which was too clearly defined and solemnly established, to be put for a moment in

dispute. It was the question of rents and revenues alone, he observed, which he was willing to submit to the decision of a learned man, not that of the government of the Indies. As the monarch persisted, however, in embracing both questions in the arbitration, the proposed measure was never carried into effect.

It was, in fact, on the subject of his dignities alone that Columbus was tenacious; all other matters he considered of minor importance. In a conversation with the King, he absolutely disavowed all wish of entering into any suit or pleading as to his pecuniary dues; on the contrary, he offered to put all his privileges and writings into the hands of his sovereign, and to receive out of the dues arising from them, whatever his Majesty might think proper to award. All that he claimed without qualification or reserve, were his official dignities, assured to him under the royal seal, and with all the solemnity of a treaty. He entreated, at all events, that these matters might speedily be decided, so that he might be released from a state of miserable suspense, and enabled to retire to some quiet corner, in search of that tranquillity and repose, necessary to his fatigues and his infirmities.

To this frank appeal to his justice and generosity, Ferdinand replied with many courteous

expressions, and with those general evasive promises, which beguile the ear of the court applicant, but convey no comfort to his heart. "As far as actions went," observed Las Casas, "the King not merely showed him no signs of favor, but, on the contrary, discountenanced him as much as possible; yet he was never wanting in complimentary expressions."

Many months were passed by Columbus in unavailing solicitation, during which he continued to receive outward demonstrations of respect from the King, and due attention from Cardinal Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo, and other principal personages; but he had learnt to appreciate and distrust the hollow civilities of a court. His claims were referred to a tribunal, called "The Council of the Discharges of the Conscience of the Deceased Queen, and of the King." This is a kind of tribunal, commonly known by the name of the *Junta de Descargos*, composed of persons nominated by the sovereign, to superintend the accomplishment of the last will of his predecessor, and the discharge of his debts. Two consultations were held by this body, but nothing was determined. The wishes of the King were too well known to be thwarted. "It was believed," says Las Casas, "that if the King could have done so with a safe conscience,

and without detriment to his fame, he would have respected few or none of the privileges which he and the Queen had conceded to the Admiral, and which had been so justly merited."*

Columbus still flattered himself that his claims being of such importance, and touching a question of sovereignty, the adjustment of them might be only postponed by the King until he could consult with his daughter Juana, who had succeeded to her mother as Queen of Castile, and who was daily expected from Flanders, with her husband King Philip. He endeavored therefore to bear delays with patience; but he had no longer the physical strength and glorious anticipations which once sustained him through his long applications at this court. Life itself was drawing to a close.

He was once more confined to his bed by a tormenting attack of the gout, aggravated by the sorrows and disappointments which preyed upon his heart. From this couch of anguish he addressed one more appeal to the justice of the King. He no longer petitioned for himself; it was for his son Diego. Nor did he dwell upon his pecuniary dues; it was the honorable trophies of his services which he wished to secure and perpetuate in his family

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 37.

He entreated that his son Diego might be appointed in his place to the government of which he had been so wrongfully deprived. "This," he said, "is a matter which concerns my honor; as to all the rest, do as your Majesty may think proper; give or withhold, as may be most for your interest, and I shall be content. I believe the anxiety caused by the delay of this affair is the principal cause of my ill-health." A petition to the same purpose was presented at the same time by his son Diego, offering to take with him such persons for counsellors as the King should appoint, and to be guided by their advice.

These petitions were treated by Ferdinand with his usual professions and evasions. "The more applications were made to him," observes Las Casas, "the more favorably did he reply; but still he delayed, hoping, by exhausting their patience, to induce them to waive their privileges, and accept in place thereof titles and estates in Castile." Columbus rejected all propositions of the kind with indignation, as calculated to compromise those titles which were the trophies of his achievements. He saw, however, that all further hope of redress from Ferdinand was vain. From the bed to which he was confined he addressed a letter to his constant friend Diego de Deza, expressive of

his despair. "It appears that his Majesty does not think fit to fulfil that which he, with the Queen, who is now in glory, promised me by word and seal. For me to contend for the contrary would be to contend with the wind. I have done all that I could do. I leave the rest to God, whom I have ever found propitious to me in my necessities."*

The cold and calculating Ferdinand beheld this illustrious man sinking under infirmity of body, heightened by that deferred hope which "maketh the heart sick." A little more delay, a little more disappointment, and a little longer infliction of ingratitude, and this loyal and generous heart would cease to beat. He should then be delivered from the just claims of a well-tried servant, who, in ceasing to be useful, was considered by him to have become importunate.

* Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. i.

Chapter IV.

DEATH OF COLUMBUS.

IN the midst of illness and despondency, when both life and hope were expiring in the bosom of Columbus, a new gleam was awakened and blazed up for a moment with characteristic fervor. He heard with joy of the landing of King Philip and Queen Juana, who had just arrived from Flanders to take possession of their throne of Castile. In the daughter of Isabella he trusted once more to find a patroness and a friend. King Ferdinand and all the court repaired to Laredo to receive the youthful sovereigns. Columbus would gladly have done the same, but he was confined to his bed by a severe return of his malady; neither in his painful and helpless situation could he dispense with the aid and ministry of his son Diego. His brother, the Adelantado, therefore, his main dependence in all emergencies, was sent to represent him and to present his

homage and congratulations. Columbus wrote by him to the new King and Queen, expressing his grief at being prevented by illness from coming in person to manifest his devotion, but begging to be considered among the most faithful of their subjects. He expressed a hope that he should receive at their hands the restitution of his honors and estates, and assured them that, though cruelly tortured at present by disease, he would yet be able to render them services, the like of which had never been witnessed.

Such was the last sally of his sanguine and unconquerable spirit; which, disregarding age and infirmities and all past sorrows and disappointments, spoke from his dying bed with all the confidence of youthful hope; and talked of still greater enterprises, as if he had a long and vigorous life before him. The Adelantado took leave of his brother whom he was never to behold again, and set out on his mission to the new sovereigns. He experienced the most gracious reception. The claims of the Admiral were treated with great attention by the young King and Queen, and flattering hopes were given of a speedy and prosperous termination to his suit.

In the meantime the cares and troubles of Columbus were drawing to a close. The mo-

mentary fire which had reanimated him was soon quenched by accumulated infirmities. Immediately after the departure of the Adelantado his illness increased in violence. His last voyage had shattered beyond repair a frame already worn and wasted by a life of hardship; and continual anxieties robbed him of that sweet repose so necessary to recruit the weariness and debility of age. The cold ingratitude of his sovereign chilled his heart. The continued suspension of his honors, and the enmity and defamation experienced at every turn, seemed to throw a shadow over that glory which had been the great object of his ambition. This shadow, it is true, could be but of transient duration; but it is difficult for the most illustrious man to look beyond the present cloud which may obscure his fame, and anticipate its permanent lustre in the admiration of posterity.

Being admonished by failing strength and increasing sufferings that his end was approaching, he prepared to leave his affairs in order for the benefit of his successors.

It is said that on the 4th of May he wrote an informal testamentary codicil on the blank page of a little breviary, given him by Pope Alexander VI. In this he bequeathed that book to the Republic of Genoa, which he also appointed successor to his privileges and dignities on the

extinction of his male line. He directed likewise the erection of an hospital in that city with the produce of his possessions in Italy. The authenticity of this document is questioned, and has become a point of warm contest among commentators. It is not, however, of much importance. The paper is such as might readily have been written by a person like Columbus in the paroxysm of disease, when he imagined his end suddenly approaching, and shows the affection with which his thoughts were bent on his native city. It is termed among commentators a military codicil, because testamentary dispositions of this kind are executed by the soldier at the point of death, without the usual formalities required by the civil law. About two weeks afterwards, on the eve of his death, he executed a final and regularly authenticated codicil, in which he bequeathed his dignities and estates with better judgment.

In these last and awful moments, when the soul has but a brief space in which to make up its account between heaven and earth, all dissimulation is at an end, and we read unequivocal evidences of character. The last codicil of Columbus, made at the very verge of the grave, is stamped with his ruling passion and his benignant virtues. He repeats and enforces several clauses of his original testament, consti-

tuting his son Diego his universal heir. The entailed inheritance of *mayorazgo*, in case he died without male issue, was to go to his brother Don Fernando, and from him, in like case, to pass to his uncle Don Bartholomew, descending always to the nearest male heir: in failure of which, it was to pass to the female nearest in lineage to the Admiral. He enjoined upon whoever should inherit his estate never to alienate or diminish it, but to endeavor by all means to augment its prosperity and importance. He likewise enjoined upon his heirs to be prompt and devoted at all times, with person and estate, to serve their sovereign and promote the Christian faith. He ordered that Don Diego should devote one tenth of the revenues which might arise from his estate, when it came to be productive, to the relief of indigent relatives and of other persons in necessity; that, out of the remainder, he should yield certain yearly proportions to his brother Don Fernando, and his uncles Don Bartholomew and Don Diego; and that the part allotted to Don Fernando should be settled upon him and his male heirs in an entailed and unalienable inheritance. Having thus provided for the maintenance and perpetuity of his family and dignities, he ordered that Don Diego, when his estates should be sufficiently productive, should erect a chapel

in the island of Hispaniola, which God had given to him so marvellously, at the town of Conception, in the Vega, where masses should be daily performed for the repose of the souls of himself, his father, his mother, his wife, and of all who died in the Faith. Another clause recommends to the care of Don Diego, Beatrix Enriquez, the mother of his natural son Fernando. His connection with her had never been sanctioned by matrimony, and either this circumstance, or some neglect of her, seems to have awakened deep compunction in his dying moments. He orders Don Diego to provide for her respectable maintenance; "and let this be done," he adds, "for the discharge of my conscience, for it weighs heavy on my soul."* Finally he noted with his own hand several minute sums, to be paid to persons at different and distant places, without being told whence they received them. These appear to have

* Diego, the son of the Admiral, notes in his own testament this bequest of his father, and says, that he was charged by him to pay Beatrix Enriquez 10,000 *maravedis* a year, which for some time he had faithfully performed: but as he believes that for three or four years previous to her death he had neglected to do so, he orders that the deficiency shall be ascertained and paid to her heirs. *Memorial ajustado sobre la propriedad del mayorazgo que fondo D. Christ. Colon.* § 245.

been trivial debts of conscience, or rewards for petty services received in times long past. Among these is one of half a mark of silver to a poor Jew, who lived at the gate of the Jewry, in the city of Lisbon. These minute provisions evince the scrupulous attention to justice in all his dealings, and that love of punctuality in the fulfilment of duties for which he was remarked. In the same spirit, he gave much advice to his son Diego, as to the conduct of his affairs, enjoining upon him to take every month an account with his own hand of the expenses of his household, and to sign it with his name; for a want in regularity in this, he observed, lost both property and servants, and turned the last into enemies.* His dying bequests were made in presence of a few faithful followers and servants, and among them we find the name of Bartholomeo Fiesco, who had accompanied Diego Mendez in the perilous voyage in a canoe from Jamaica to Hispaniola.

Having thus scrupulously attended to all the claims of affection, loyalty, and justice upon earth, Columbus turned his thoughts to Heaven; and having received the holy sacrament, and performed all the pious offices of a devout Christian, he expired with great resignation, on the day of Ascension, the 20th of May

* *Memorial ajustado*, § 248.

1506, being about seventy years of age.* His last words were, "*In manus tuas Domine, commendo spiritum meum*" : Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.†

His body was deposited in the convent of St. Francisco, and his obsequies were celebrated with funereal pomp at Valladolid, in the parochial church of Santa Maria de la Antigua. His remains were transported afterwards, in 1513, to the Carthusian monastery of Las Cuevas of Seville, to the chapel of St. Ann, or of Santo Christo, in which chapel were likewise deposited those of his son Don Diego, who died in the village of Montalban, on the 23d of Febbruary, 1526. In the year 1536 the bodies of Columbus and his son Diego were removed to Hispaniola, and interred in the principal chapel of the cathedral of the city of San Domingo ; but even here they did not rest in quiet, having since been again disinterred, and conveyed to Havana, in the island of Cuba.

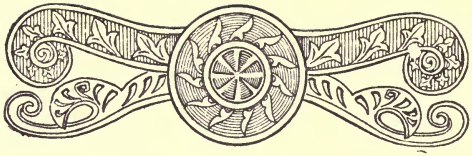
We are told that Ferdinand, after the death of Columbus, showed a sense of his merits by ordering a monument to be erected to his memory, on which was inscribed the motto already cited, which had formerly been granted to him

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 121.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 38. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 108.

by the sovereigns: A CASTILLA Y A LEON NUEVA MUNDO DIO COLON (*To Castile and Leon Columbus gave a new world*). However great an honor a monument may be for a subject to receive, it is certainly but a cheap reward for a sovereign to bestow. As to the motto inscribed upon it, it remains engraved in the memory of mankind, more indelibly than in brass or marble; a record of the great debt of gratitude due to the discoverer, which the monarch had so faithlessly neglected to discharge.

Attempts have been made in recent days, by loyal Spanish writers, to vindicate the conduct of Ferdinand towards Columbus. They were doubtless well intended, but they have been futile, nor is their failure to be regretted. To screen such injustice in so eminent a character from the reprobation of mankind, is to deprive history of one of its most important uses. Let the ingratitude of Ferdinand stand recorded in its full extent, and endure throughout all time. The dark shadow which it casts upon his brilliant renown, will be a lesson to all rulers, teaching them what is important to their own fame in their treatment of illustrious men.



Chapter V.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF COLUMBUS.

IN narrating the story of Columbus it has been the endeavor of the author to place him in a clear and familiar point of view; for this purpose he has rejected no circumstance, however trivial, which appeared to evolve some point of character; and he has sought all kinds of collateral facts which might throw light upon his views and motives. With this view also he has detailed many facts hitherto passed over in silence or vaguely noticed by historians, probably because they might be deemed instances of error or misconduct on the part of Columbus; but he who paints a great man merely in great and heroic traits, though he may produce a fine picture, will never present a faithful portrait. Great men are compounds of great and little qualities. Indeed, much of their greatness arises from their mas-

tery over the imperfections of their nature, and their noblest actions are sometimes struck forth by the collision of their merits and their defects.

In Columbus were singularly combined the practical and the poetical. His mind had grasped all kinds of knowledge, whether procured by study or observation, which bore upon his theories; impatient of the scanty aliment of the day, "his impetuous ardor," as has well been observed, "threw him into the study of the fathers of the Church; the Arabian Jews, and the ancient geographers"; while his daring but irregular genius, bursting from the limits of imperfect science, bore him to conclusions far beyond the intellectual visions of his contemporaries. If some of his conclusions were erroneous, they were at least ingenious and splendid, and their error resulted from the clouds which still hung over his peculiar path of enterprise. His own discoveries enlightened the ignorance of the age; guided conjecture to certainty, and dispelled that very darkness with which he had been obliged to struggle.

In the progress of his discoveries he has been remarked for the extreme sagacity and the admirable justness with which he seized upon the phenomena of the exterior world.

The variations, for instance, of terrestrial magnetism, the direction of currents, the groupings of marine plants, fixing one of the grand climateric divisions of the ocean, the temperatures changing not solely with the distance of the equator, but also with the difference of meridians. These and similar phenomena, as they broke upon him, were discerned with wonderful quickness of perception, and made to contribute important principles to the stock of general knowledge. This lucidity of spirit, this quick convertibility of facts to principles, distinguish him from the dawn to the close of his sublime enterprise, insomuch that, with all the sallying ardor of his imagination, his ultimate success has been admirably characterized as a "conquest of reflection."*

It has been said that mercenary views mingled with the ambition of Columbus, and that his stipulations with the Spanish court were selfish and avaricious. The charge is inconsiderate and unjust. He aimed at dignity and wealth in the same lofty spirit as he sought renown; they were to be part and parcel of his achievement and palpable evidence of his success; they were to arise from the territories he should discover, and be commensurate in importance. No condition could be more

* D. Humboldt, *Examen Critique.*

just. He asked nothing of the sovereigns but a command of the countries he hoped to give them, and a share of the profits to support the dignity of his command. If there should be no country discovered his stipulated viceroyalty would be of no avail; and if no revenues should be produced, his labor and peril would produce no gain. If his command and revenues ultimately proved magnificent, it was from the magnificence of the regions he had attached to the Castilian Crown. What monarch would not rejoice to gain empire on such conditions? But he did not risk merely a loss of labor and a disappointment of ambition in the enterprise. On his motives being questioned, he voluntarily undertook, and with the assistance of his coadjutors actually defrayed, one eighth of the whole charge of the first expedition.

It was, in fact, this rare union, already noticed, of the practical man of business with the poetical projector, which enabled him to carry his grand enterprises into effect through so many difficulties; but the pecuniary calculations and cares which gave feasibility to his schemes, were never suffered to chill the glowing aspirations of his soul. The gains that promised to arise from his discoveries he intended to appropriate in the same princely and

pious spirit in which they were demanded. He contemplated works and achievements of benevolence and religion; vast contributions for the relief of the poor of his native city; the foundation of churches where masses should be said for the souls of the departed; and armies for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre in Palestine. Thus his ambition was truly noble and lofty, instinct with high thought and prone to generous deed.

In the discharge of his office he maintained the state and ceremonial of a viceroy, and was tenacious of his rank and privileges; not from a mere vulgar love of titles, but because he prized them as testimonials and trophies of his achievements; these he jealously cherished as his great rewards. In his repeated applications to the King, he insisted merely on the restitution of his dignities. As to his pecuniary dues, and all questions relative to mere revenue, he offered to leave them to arbitration, or even to the absolute disposition of the monarch; but not so his official dignities. "These things," said he nobly, "affect my honor." In his testament, he enjoined on his son Diego, and whoever after him should inherit his estates, whatever dignities and titles might afterwards be granted by the King, always to sign himself simply "the Ad-

miral," by way of perpetuating in the family its real source of greatness.

His conduct was characterized by the grandeur of his views and the magnanimity of his spirit. Instead of scouring the newly found countries, like a grasping adventurer eager only for immediate gain, as was too generally the case with contemporary discoverers, he sought to ascertain their soil and productions, their rivers and harbors. He was desirous of colonizing and cultivating them; of conciliating and civilizing the natives; of building cities; introducing the useful arts; subjecting everything to the control of law, order, and religion; and thus of founding regular and prosperous empires. In this glorious plan he was constantly defeated by the dissolute rabble which it was his misfortune to command; with whom all law was tyranny, and all order restraint. They interrupted all useful works by their seditions; provoked the peaceful Indians to hostility; and after they had thus drawn down misery and warfare upon their own heads, and overwhelmed Columbus with the ruins of the edifice he was building, they charged him with being the cause of the confusion.

Well would it have been for Spain, had those who followed in the track of Columbus

possessed his sound policy and liberal views. The New World, in such cases, would have been settled by pacific colonists, and civilized by enlightened legislators; instead of being overrun by desperate adventurers and desolated by avaricious conquerors.

Columbus was a man of quick sensibility, liable to great excitement, to sudden and strong impressions, and powerful impulses. He was naturally irritable and impetuous, and keenly sensible to injury and injustice; yet the quickness of his temper was counteracted by the benevolence and generosity of his heart. The magnanimity of his nature shone forth through all the troubles of his stormy career. Though continually outraged in his dignities, and braved in the exercise of his command; though foiled in his plans and endangered in his person by the seditions of turbulent and worthless men, and that too at times when suffering under anxiety of mind and anguish of body sufficient to exasperate the most patient, yet he restrained his valiant and indignant spirit by the strong powers of his mind, and brought himself to forbear, and reason, and even to supplicate. Nor should we fail to notice how free he was from all feeling of revenge; how ready to forgive and forget on the least sign of repentance and atonement.

He has been extolled for his skill in controlling others, but far greater praise is due to him for his firmness in governing himself.

His natural benignity made him accessible to all kinds of pleasurable sensations from external objects. In his letters and journals, instead of detailing circumstances with the technical precision of a mere navigator, he notices the beauties of nature with the enthusiasm of a poet or a painter. As he coasts the shores of the New World, the reader participates in the enjoyment with which he describes, in his imperfect but picturesque Spanish, the varied objects around him; the blandness of the temperature, the purity of the atmosphere, the fragrance of the air, "full of dew and sweetness," the verdure of the forests, the magnificence of the trees, the grandeur of the mountains, and the limpidity and freshness of the running streams. New delight springs up for him in every scene. He extols each new discovery as more beautiful than the last and each as the most beautiful in the world; until, with his simple earnestness, he tells the sovereigns that having spoken so highly of the preceding islands, he fears that they will not credit him, when he declares that the one he is actually describing surpasses them all in excellence.

In the same ardent and unstudied way he

expresses his emotions on various occasions, readily affected by impulses of joy or grief, of pleasure or indignation. When surrounded and overwhelmed by the ingratitude and violence of worthless men he often, in the retirement of his cabin, gave way to bursts of sorrow, and relieved his overladen heart by sighs and groans. When he returned in chains to Spain and came into the presence of Isabella, instead of continuing the lofty pride with which he had hitherto sustained his injuries, he was touched with grief and tenderness at her sympathy, and burst forth into sobs and tears.

He was devoutly pious, religion mingled with the whole course of his thoughts and actions, and shone forth in his most private and unstudied writings. Whenever he made any great discovery, he celebrated it by solemn thanks to God. The voice of prayer and melody of praise rose from his ships when they first beheld the New World, and his first action on landing was to prostrate himself upon the earth and return thanksgivings. Every evening the *Salva Regina* and other vesper hymns were chanted by his crew, and masses were performed in the beautiful groves bordering the wild shores of this heathen land. All his great enterprises were undertaken in the name of the Holy Trinity, and he partook of the

communion previous to embarkation. He was a firm believer in the efficacy of vows and penances and pilgrimages, and resorted to them in times of difficulty and danger. The religion thus deeply seated in his soul diffused a sober dignity and benign composure over his whole demeanor. His language was pure and guarded, and free from all imprecations, oaths, and other irreverent expressions.

It cannot be denied, however, that his piety was mingled with superstition and darkened by the bigotry of the age. He evidently concurred in the opinion that all nations which did not acknowledge the Christian faith were destitute of natural rights ; that the sternest measures might be used for their conversion, and the severest punishment inflicted upon their obstinacy in unbelief. In this spirit of bigotry he considered himself justified in making captives of the Indians, and transporting them to Spain to have them taught the doctrines of Christianity, and in selling them for slaves if they pretended to resist his invasions. In so doing he sinned against the natural goodness of his character, and against the feelings which he had originally entertained and expressed towards this gentle and hospitable people ; but he was goaded on by the mercenary impatience of the Crown, and by the sneers of his enemies

at the unprofitable result of his enterprises. It is but justice to his character to observe that the enslavement of the Indians thus taken in battle was at first openly countenanced by the Crown, and that, when the question of right came to be discussed at the entreaty of the Queen, several of the most distinguished jurists and theologians advocated the practice; so that the question was finally settled in favor of the Indians solely by the humanity of Isabella. As the venerable Bishop Las Casas observes, where the most learned men have doubted it is not surprising that an unlearned mariner should err.

These remarks, in palliation of the conduct of Columbus, are required by candor. It is proper to show him in connection with the age in which he lived, lest the errors of the times should be considered as his individual faults. It is not the intention of the author, however, to justify Columbus on a point where it is inexcusable to err. Let it remain a blot on his illustrious name, and let others derive a lesson from him.

We have already hinted at the peculiar trait of his rich and varied character; that ardent and enthusiastic imagination which threw a magnificence over his whole course of thought. Herrera intimates that he had a talent for

poetry, and some slight traces of it are on record in the book of prophecies which he presented to the Catholic sovereigns. But his poetical temperament is discernible throughout all his writings and in all his actions. It spread a golden and glorious world around him, and tinged everything with its own gorgeous colors. It betrayed him into visionary speculations, which subjected him to the sneers and cavillings of men of cooler and safer, but more grovelling minds. Such were the conjectures formed on the coast of Paria about the form of the earth, and the situation of the terrestrial Paradise; about the mines of Ophir in Hispaniola, and the Aurea Chersonesus in Veragua; and such was the heroic scheme of a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. It mingled with his religion, and filled his mind with solemn and visionary meditations on mystic passages of the Scriptures and the shadowy portents of the prophecies. It exalted his office in his eyes, and made him conceive himself an agent sent forth upon a sublime and awful mission, subject to impulses and supernatural intimations from the Deity; such as the voice which he imagined spoke to him in comfort amidst the troubles of Hispaniola, and in the silence of the night on the disastrous coast of Veragua.

He was decidedly a visionary, but a visionary of an uncommon and successful kind. The manner in which his ardent, imaginative, and mercurial nature was controlled by a powerful judgment, and directed by an acute sagacity, is the most extraordinary feature in his character. Thus governed, his imagination, instead of exhausting itself in idle flights, lent aid to his judgment and enabled him to form conclusions at which common minds would never have arrived, nay, which they could not perceive when pointed out.

To his intellectual vision it was given to read the signs of the times, and to trace, in the conjectures and reveries of past ages, the indications of an unknown world; as soothsayers were said to read predictions in the stars, and to foretell events from the visions of the night. "His soul," observes a Spanish writer, "was superior to the age in which he lived. For him was reserved the great enterprise of traversing that sea which had given rise to so many fables, and of deciphering the mystery of his time."*

With all the visionary fervor of his imagination, its fondest dreams fell short of the reality. He died in ignorance of the real grandeur of his discovery. Until his last breath he enter-

* Cladera, *Investigaciones Historias*, p. 43.

tained the idea that he had merely opened a new way to the old resorts of opulent commerce, and had discovered some of the wild regions of the East. He supposed Hispaniola to be the ancient Ophir which had been visited by the ships of Solomon, and that Cuba and Terra Firma were but remote parts of Asia. What visions of glory would have broken upon his mind, could he have known that he had indeed discovered a new continent, equal to the whole of the Old World in magnitude, and separated by two vast oceans from all the earth hitherto known by civilized man! And how would his magnanimous spirit have been consoled, amidst the afflictions of age and cares of penury, the neglect of a fickle public, and the injustice of an ungrateful king, could he have anticipated the splendid empires which were to spread over the beautiful world he had discovered; and the nations, and tongues, and languages which were to fill its lands with his renown, and revere and bless his name to the latest posterity!

END OF LIFE OF COLUMBUS.

VOYAGES AND DISCOVERIES OF THE COMPANIONS OF COLUMBUS.

VOYAGES AND DISCOVERIES OF THE COMPANIONS OF COLUMBUS.

Introduction.

THE first discovery of the Western Hemisphere has already been related by the author in his *History of Columbus*. It is proposed by him in the present work to narrate the enterprises of certain of the companions and disciples of the Admiral, who, enkindled by his zeal and instructed by his example, sallied forth separately in the vast region of adventure to which he had led the way. Many of them sought merely to skirt the continent which he had partially visited; to secure the first fruits of the pearl fisheries of Paria and Cubagua, or to explore the coast of Veragua, which he had represented as the

Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients. Others aspired to accomplish a grand discovery which he had meditated towards the close of his career. In the course of his expeditions along the coast of Terra Firma, Columbus had repeatedly received information of the existence of a vast sea to the south. He supposed it to be the great Indian Ocean, the region of the Oriental spice islands, and that it must communicate by a strait with the Caribbean Sea. His last and most disastrous voyage was made for the express purpose of discovering that imaginary strait and making his way into this Southern ocean. The illustrious navigator, however, was doomed to die, as it were, upon the threshold of his discoveries. It was reserved for one of his followers, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, to obtain the first view of the promised ocean from the lofty mountains of Darien, some years after the eyes of the venerable Admiral had been closed in death. The expeditions here narrated, therefore, may be considered as springing immediately out of the voyages of Columbus, and fulfilling some of his grand designs. They may be compared to the attempts of adventurous knights-errant to achieve the enterprise left unfinished by some illustrious predecessor. Neither is this comparison entirely fanciful; on the contrary,

it is a curious fact well worthy of notice that the spirit of chivalry entered largely into the early expeditions of the Spanish discoverers, giving them a character wholly distinct from similar enterprises undertaken by other nations. It will not, perhaps, be considered far-sought if we trace the cause of this peculiarity to the domestic history of the Spaniards during the Middle Ages.

Eight centuries of incessant warfare with the Moorish usurpers of the Peninsula produced a deep and lasting effect upon Spanish character and manners. The war being ever close at home mingled itself with the domestic habits and concerns of the Spaniards. He was born a soldier. The wild and predatory nature of the war also made him a kind of chivalrous marauder. His horse and weapon were always ready for the field. His delight was in roving incursions and extravagant exploits, and no gain was so glorious in his eyes as the *cavalgada* of spoils and captives driven home in triumph from a plundered province. Religion, which has ever held great empire over the Spanish mind, lent its aid to sanctify these roving and ravaging propensities, and the Castilian cavalier as he sacked the towns and laid waste the fields of his Moslem neighbor, piously believed he was doing God service.

The conquest of Granada put an end to the peninsular wars between Christian and Infidel; the spirit of Spanish chivalry was thus suddenly deprived of its wonted sphere of action; but it had been too long fostered and excited to be as suddenly appeased. The youth of the nation bred up to daring adventure and heroic achievement, could not brook the tranquil and regular pursuits of common life, but panted for some new field of romantic enterprise.

It was at this juncture that the grand project of Columbus was carried into effect. His treaty with the sovereigns was, in a manner, signed with the same pen that had subscribed the capitulation of the Moorish capital, and his first expedition may almost be said to have departed from beneath the walls of Granada. Many of the youthful cavaliers who had fleshed their swords in that memorable war crowded the ships of the discoverers, thinking a new career of arms was to be opened to them—a kind of crusade into splendid and unknown regions of infidels. The very weapons and armor that had been used against the Moors were drawn from the arsenal to equip the heroes of these remoter adventures, and some of the most noted commanders in the New World will be found to have made their first essay in arms under the banner of Ferdinand and Isabella, in their

romantic campaigns among the mountains of Andalusia.

To these circumstances may, in a great measure, be ascribed that swelling chivalrous spirit which will be found continually mingling, or rather warring, with the technical habits of the seamen and the sordid schemes of the mercenary adventurer in these early Spanish discoveries. Chivalry had left the land and launched upon the deep. The Spanish cavalier had embarked in the caravel of the discoverer. He carried among the trackless wildernesses of the New World the same contempt of danger and fortitude under suffering; the same restless, roaming spirit; the same passion for inroad and ravage, and vainglorious exploit; and the same fervent, and often bigoted, zeal for the propagation of his faith that had distinguished him during his warfare with the Moors. Instances in point will be found in the extravagant career of the daring Ojeda, particularly in his adventures along the coast of Terra Firma and the wild shores of Cuba; in the sad story of the "unfortunate Nicuesa," graced as it is with occasional touches of high-bred courtesy; in the singular cruise of that brave but credulous old cavalier, Juan Ponce de Leon, who fell upon the flowery coast of Florida in his search after

an imaginary fountain of youth; and above all, in the checkered fortunes of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, whose discovery of the Pacific Ocean forms one of the most beautiful and striking incidents in the history of the New World, and whose fate might furnish a theme of wonderful interest for a poem or a drama.

The extraordinary actions and adventures of these men, while they rival the exploits recorded in chivalric romance, have the additional interest of verity. They leave us in admiration of the bold and heroic qualities inherent in the Spanish character, which led that nation to so high a pitch of glory and power, and which are still discernible in the great mass of that gallant people, by those who have an opportunity of judging them rightly.

Before concluding these prefatory remarks, the Author would acknowledge how much he has been indebted to the third volume of the invaluable *Historical Collection* of Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, wherein that author has exhibited his usual industry, accuracy, and critical acumen. He has likewise profited greatly by the second volume of Oviedo's *General History*, which only exists in manuscript, and a copy of which he found in the Columbian Library of the Cathedral of Seville.

He has had some assistance also from the

documents of the law case between Don Diego Columbus and the Crown, which exist in the Archives of the Indies, and for an inspection of which he is much indebted to the permission of the Government and the kind attentions of Don Josef de la Higuera y Lara, the intelligent keeper of the Archives. These, with the historical works of Herrera, Las Casas, Gomera, and Peter Martyr, have been his authorities for the facts contained in the following work, though he has not thought proper to refer to them continually at the bottom of his page.

While his work was going through the press, he received a volume of Spanish Biography, written with great elegance and accuracy by Don Manuel Josef Quintana, and containing a life of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. He was gratified to find that his own arrangement of facts was generally corroborated by this work; though he was enabled to correct his dates in several instances, and to make a few other emendations from the volume of Señor Quintana, whose position in Spain gave him the means of attaining superior exactness on these points.

ALONSO DE OJEDA.*

HIS FIRST VOYAGE, IN WHICH HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AMERIGO VESPUCCI.†

Chapter I.

SOME ACCOUNT OF OJEDA—OF JUAN DE LA COSA—OF AMERIGO VESPUCCI—PREPARATIONS FOR THE VOYAGE.

[1499.]

THOSE who have read the *History of Columbus* will doubtless remember the character and exploits of Alonso de Ojeda. As some of the readers of the following pages however may not have perused that work, and as it is proposed at present to trace the subsequent fortunes of this youthful

* Ojeda is pronounced in Spanish Ohāda, with a strong aspiration of the *h*.

† Vespucci, pronounced Vespuchy.

adventurer, a brief sketch of him may not be deemed superfluous.

Alonso de Ojeda was a native of Cuenca, in New Castile, and of a respectable family. He was brought up as a page or esquire in the service of Don Luis de Cerda, Duke of Medini Celi, one of the most powerful nobles of Spain; the same who for some time patronized Columbus during his application to the Spanish court.*

In those warlike days, when the Peninsula was distracted by contests between the Christian kingdoms, by feuds between the nobles and the Crown, and by incessant and marauding warfare with the Moors, the household of a Spanish nobleman was a complete school of arms, where the youth of the country were sent to be trained up in all kinds of hardy exercises and to be led to battle under an illustrious banner. Such was especially the case with the service of the Duke of Medina Celi, who possessed princely domains, whose household was a petty court, who led legions of armed retainers to the field, and who appeared in splendid state and with an immense retinue, more as an ally of Ferdinand and Isabella than as a subject. He engaged in many of the roughest expeditions of the memorable war of Granada, always insist-

* *Varones Ilustres*, por F. Pizarro y Orellana, p. 41. Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 82.

ing on leading his own troops in person when the service was of peculiar difficulty and danger. Alonso de Ojeda was formed to signalize himself in such a school. Though small of stature he was well made and of wonderful force and activity, with a towering spirit that seemed to make up for difficiency of height. He was a bold and graceful horseman, an excellent foot soldier, dexterous with every weapon, and noted for his extraordinary skill and adroitness in all feats of strength and agility.

He must have been quite young when he followed the Duke of Medina Celi, as page, to the Moorish wars; for he was but about twenty-one years of age when he accompanied Columbus in his second voyage. He had already, however, distinguished himself by his enterprising spirit and headlong valor; and his exploits during that voyage contributed to enhance his reputation. He returned to Spain with Columbus but did not accompany him in his third voyage, in the spring of 1498. He was probably impatient of subordination and ambitious of a separate employment or command, which the influence of his connections gave him a great chance of obtaining. He had a cousin-german of his own name, the reverend Padre Alonso de Ojeda, a Dominican friar, one of the first inquisitors of Spain, and a great favorite with

the Catholic sovereigns.* This father inquisitor was, moreover, an intimate friend of the Bishop Don Juan Rodriguez Fonseca, who had the chief management of the affairs of the Indies, under which general name were comprehended all the countries discovered in the New World. Through the good offices of his cousin-inquisitor, therefore, Ojeda had been introduced to the notice of the Bishop, who took him into his special favor and patronage. Mention has already been made, in the *History of Columbus*, of a present made by the Bishop to Ojeda of a small Flemish painting of the Holy Virgin. This the young adventurer carried about with him as a protecting relic, invoking it at all times of peril, whether by sea or land; and to the special care of the Virgin he attributed the remarkable circumstance, that he had never been wounded in any of the innumerable brawls and battles into which he was continually betrayed by his rash and fiery temperament.

While Ojeda was lingering about the court, letters were received from Columbus, giving an account of the events of his third voyage, especially of his discovery of the coast of Paria, which he described as abounding in drugs and spices, in gold and silver and precious stones, and above all in Oriental pearls, and which he

* Pizarro, *Varones Ilustres.*

supposed to be the borders of that vast and unknown region of the East, wherein, according to certain learned theorists, was situated the terrestrial Paradise. Specimens of the pearls, procured in considerable quantities from the natives, accompanied his epistle, together with charts descriptive of his route. These tidings caused a great sensation among the maritime adventurers of Spain; but no one was more excited by them than Alonso de Ojeda, who, from his intimacy with the Bishop, had full access to the charts and correspondence of Columbus. He immediately conceived the project of making a voyage in the route thus marked out by the Admiral, and of seizing upon the first fruits of discovery which he had left ungathered. His scheme met with ready encouragement from Fonseca, who, as has heretofore been shown, was an implacable enemy to Columbus, and willing to promote any measure that might injure or molest him. The Bishop accordingly granted a commission to Ojeda, authorizing him to fit out an armament and proceed on a voyage of discovery, with the proviso merely that he should not visit any territories appertaining to Portugal, nor any of the lands discovered in the name of Spain previous to the year 1495. The latter part of this provision appears to have been

craftily worded by the Bishop, so as to leave the coast of Paria and its pearl-fisheries open to Ojeda, they having been recently discovered by Columbus in 1498.

The commission was signed by Fonseca alone, in virtue of general powers vested in him for such purposes, but the signature of the sovereigns did not appear on the instrument, and it is doubtful whether their sanction was sought on the occasion. He knew that Columbus had recently remonstrated against a royal mandate issued in 1495, permitting voyages of discovery by private adventurers, and that the sovereigns had in consequence revoked their mandate wherever it might be deemed prejudicial to the stipulated privileges of the Admiral.* It is probable therefore that the Bishop avoided raising any question that might impede the enterprise; being confident of the ultimate approbation of Ferdinand, who would be well pleased to have his dominions in the New World extended by the discoveries of private adventurers, undertaken at their own expense. It was stipulated in this, as well as in subsequent licences for private expeditions, that a certain proportion of the profits, generally a fourth or fifth, should be reserved for the Crown.

Having thus obtained permission to make the

* Navarrete, tom. ii., document cxiii.

voyage, the next consideration with Ojeda was to find the means. He was a young adventurer, a mere soldier of fortune, and destitute of wealth; but he had a high reputation for courage and enterprise, and with these, it was thought, would soon make his way to the richest parts of the newly discovered lands, and have the wealth of the Indies at his disposal. He had no difficulty therefore in finding moneyed associates among the rich merchants of Seville, who, at that age of discovery, were ever ready to stake their property upon the schemes of roving navigators. With such assistance he soon equipped a squadron of four vessels at Port St. Mary, opposite Cadiz. Among the seamen who engaged with him were several just returned from accompanying Columbus in his voyage to this very coast of Paria. The principal associate of Ojeda, and one on whom he placed great reliance, was Juan de la Cosa, who accompanied him as first mate, or, as it was termed, chief pilot. This was a bold Biscayan, who may be regarded as a disciple of Columbus, with whom he had sailed in his second voyage, when he coasted Cuba and Jamaica, and he had since accompanied Rodrigo de Bastides in an expedition along the coast of Terra Firma. The hardy veteran was looked up to by his contemporaries

as an oracle of the seas, and was pronounced one of the most able mariners of the day; he may be excused, therefore, if, in his harmless vanity, he considered himself on a par even with Columbus.*

Another conspicuous associate of Ojeda in this voyage was Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant, induced by broken fortunes and a rambling disposition to seek adventures in the New World. Whether he had any pecuniary interest in the expedition, and in what capacity he sailed, does not appear. His importance has entirely arisen from subsequent circumstances; from his having written and published a narrative of his voyages, and from his name having eventually been given to the New World.

Chapter III.

DEPARTURE FROM SPAIN—ARRIVAL ON THE COAST OF PARIA—CUSTOMS OF THE NATIVES.

OJEDA sailed from Port St. Mary on the 20th of May, 1499, and having touched for supplies at the Canaries, took a departure from Gomera, pursuing the route of Columbus in his third voyage, being guided by the chart he had sent

* Navarrete, *Colec. Viag.*, tom. iii., p. 4.

home, as well as by the mariners who accompanied him on that occasion. At the end of twenty-four days he reached the continent of the New World, about two hundred leagues farther south than the part discovered by Columbus, being as is supposed the coast of Surinam.*

Hence he ran along the coast of the gulf of Paria, passing the mouths of many rivers, but especially those of the Esquivo and the Oronoko. These, to the astonishment of the Spaniards, unaccustomed as yet to the mighty rivers of the New World, poured forth such a prodigious volume of water as to freshen the sea for a great extent. They beheld none of the natives until they arrived at Trinidad, on which island they met with traces of the recent visit of Columbus.

Vespucci in his letters gives a long description of the people of this island and the coast of Paria, who were of the Carib race, tall, well made, and vigorous, and expert with the bow, the lance, and the buckler. His description in general resembles those which have frequently been given of the aboriginals of the New World; there are two or three particulars however worthy of citation.

* Navarrete, tom. iii., p. 5.

They appeared, he said, to believe in no religious creed, to have no place of worship, and to make no prayers nor sacrifices; but, he adds, from the voluptuousness of their lives, they might be considered epicureans.* Their habitations were built in the shape of bells, of the trunks of trees, thatched with palm-leaves, and were proof against rain and weather. They appeared to be in common, and some of them were of such magnitude, as to contain six hundred persons. In one place there were eight principal houses capable of sheltering nearly ten thousand inhabitants. Every seven or eight years the natives were obliged to change their residence, from the maladies engendered by the heat of the climate in their crowded habitations.

Their riches consisted in beads and ornaments made from the bones of fishes, in small white and green stones strung like rosaries, with which they adorned their persons, and in the beautiful plumes of various colors for which the tropical birds are noted.

The Spaniards smiled at their simplicity in attaching an extraordinary value to such worthless trifles; while the savages in all probability were equally surprised at beholding the stran-

* *Viages des Vespucci*, Navarrete, tom. iii., p. 211.

gers so eager after gold and pearls and precious stones, which to themselves were objects of indifference.

Their manner of treating the dead was similar to that observed among the natives of some of the islands. Having deposited the corpse in a cavern or sepulchre, they placed a jar of water and a few eatables at its head, and then abandoned it without moan or lamentation. In some parts of the coast, when a person was considered near his end, his nearest relatives bore him to the woods, and laid him in a hammock suspended to the trees. They then danced around him until evening, when, having left within his reach sufficient meat and drink to sustain him for four days, they repaired to their habitations. If he recovered and returned home, he was received with much ceremony and rejoicing, if he died of his malady or of famine, nothing more was thought of him.

Their mode of treating a fever is also worthy of mention. In the height of the malady they plunged the patient in a bath of the coldest water, after which they obliged him to make many evolutions round a great fire, until he was in a violent heat, when they put him to bed that he might sleep ; a treatment by which Amerigo Vespucci declares he saw many cured.

Map of the Coast of South America, Showing the Gulf of Paria and Islands of Margarita and Cubagua

Redrawn from Wyfliet's "West Indies"

RESIDVVM CONTINENTIS CVM ADIACENTIBVS INSVLIS.
HISPANIOLÆ PARS.
Septentrio
Oriens
Occidens
Meridies
CARIBANA
ANDALVSIA NOVA.
Margarita
CVBAGVA
Tortuga
Tabago
Barbados
S. Vincent
S. Lucia
Granata
Dominica
Guadalupe
Deseada
Antiqua
Barbada
S. Bertholomeo
S. Martin
Anguilla
S. Crus
Aues
Mont serrate
Marigalante
Martina
De Orchilla
Roca
De Aues
Tortuga
La Trinidad
P. la galera
PARIA
R. Negro
R. Grande
Terra llano
R. Dorado
Neberj
Tacari
Jumbi
S. Fee
Chechorebuce
Maracapana
Jasse
Carwana
C. de Collero
Barbaruata
Anuparj
Camorj
Acripana
Aldea de Caribes
Mont Espesso
R. de vincente Pinçon
R. de Nino
R. de Baixas
R. de Carrientes
R. de Jumas
C. de Buelta
El Ancon
Analaya
R. de Pinsel
C. de Norte
P. Quises
Zacheo
C. Roxo
P. Rero
El Bolcan
Virgines
Antigada
Anillarum Archipelagus
S. Sombrero
Caribes
Coriaco
C. de Salinas
Testigos
Y. Blanca
315
320
325
330
20
15
10
5

Chapter III.

COASTING OFF TERRA FIRMA—MILITARY EXPEDITION OF OJEDA.

After touching at various parts of Trinidad and the gulf of Paria, Ojeda passed through the strait of the Boca del Dragon, or Dragon's Mouth, which Columbus had found so formidable, and then steered his course along the coast of Terra Firma, landing occasionally, until he arrived at Curiana, or the gulf of Pearls. Hence he stood to the opposite island of Margarita, previously discovered by Columbus, and since renowned for its pearl-fishery. This, as well as several adjacent islands, he visited and explored; after which he returned to the mainland, and touched at Cumana and Maracapana, where he found the rivers infested with alligators, resembling the crocodiles of the Nile.

Finding a convenient harbor at Maracapana, he unloaded and careened his vessels there, and built a small brigantine. The natives came to him in great number, bringing abundance of venison, fish, and cassava bread, and aiding the seamen in their labors. Their hospitality was not certainly disinterested, for they sought to gain the protection of the Spaniards, whom they reverenced as superhuman beings. When they thought they had sufficiently se-

cured their favor, they represented to Ojeda that their coast was subject to invasion from a distant island, the inhabitants of which were cannibals, and carried their people into captivity to be devoured at their unnatural banquets. They besought Ojeda, therefore, to avenge them upon these ferocious enemies.

The request was gratifying to the fighting propensities of Ojeda, and to his love of adventure, and was readily granted. Taking seven of the natives on board of his vessels as guides, he set sail in quest of the cannibals. After sailing for seven days he came to a chain of islands, some peopled, others uninhabited, supposed to have been the Caribbee Islands. One of these was pointed out by his guides as the habitation of their foes. On running near the shore he beheld it thronged with savages, decorated with coronets of gaudy plumes, their bodies painted with a variety of colors. They were armed with bows and arrows, with darts, lances, and bucklers, and seemed prepared to defend their island from invasion.

The show of war was calculated to rouse the martial spirit of Ojeda. He brought his ships to anchor, ordered out his boats, and provided each with a *paterero* or small cannon. Besides the oarsmen, each boat contained a number of soldiers, who were told to crouch out of sight

in the bottom. The boats then pulled in steadily for the shore. As they approached the Indians let fly a cloud of arrows, but without much effect. Seeing the boats continue to advance, the savages threw themselves into the sea, and brandished their lances to prevent their landing. Upon this, the soldiers sprang up and discharged the *patereros*. At the sound and smoke the savages abandoned the water in affright, while Ojeda and his men leaped on shore and pursued them. The Carib warriors rallied on the banks, and fought for a long time with a courage peculiar to their race, but were at length driven to the woods, at the edge of the sword, leaving many killed and wounded on the field of battle.

On the following day the savages were seen on the shore in still greater numbers, armed and painted, and decorated with war plumes, and sounding defiance with their conches and drums. Ojeda again landed with fifty-seven men, whom he separated into four companies, and ordered to charge the enemy from different directions. The Caribs fought for a time hand to hand, displaying great dexterity in covering themselves with their bucklers, but were at length entirely routed, and driven with great slaughter to the forests. The Spaniards had but one man killed and twenty-one wounded in

these combats,—such superior advantage did their armor give them over the naked savages. Having plundered and set fire to their houses they returned triumphantly to their ships, with a number of Carib captives; and made sail for the mainland. Ojeda bestowed a part of the spoil upon the seven Indians who had accompanied him as guides, and sent them exulting to their homes, to relate to their countrymen the signal vengeance wreaked upon their foes. He then anchored in a bay where he remained for twenty days, until his men had recovered from their wounds.*

Chapter IV.

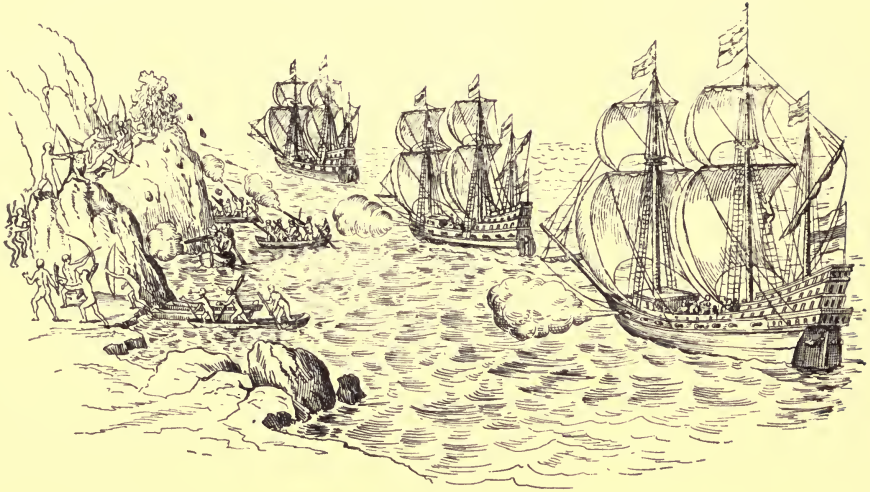
DISCOVERY OF THE GULF OF VENEZUELA—TRANSACTIONS THERE—OJEDA EXPLORES THE GULF—PENETRATES TO MARACAIBO.

His crew being refreshed and the wounded sufficiently recovered, Ojeda made sail and touched at the island of Curazao, which according to the accounts of Vespucci was inhabited by a race of

* There is some discrepance in the early accounts of this battle, as to the time and place of its occurrence. The author has collated the narratives of Vespucci, Las Casas, Herrera, and Peter Martyr, and the evidence given in the lawsuit of Diego Columbus, and has endeavored as much as possible to reconcile them.

A Difficult Landing-Place

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"



giants, "every woman appearing a Penthesilea, and every man an Antæus."* As Vespucci was a scholar, and as he supposed himself exploring the regions of the extreme East, the ancient realm of fable, it is probable his imagination deceived him and construed the formidable accounts given by the Indians of their cannibal neighbors of the islands into something according with his recollections of classic fable. Certain it is, that the reports of subsequent voyagers proved the inhabitants of the island to be of the ordinary size.

Proceeding along the coast, he arrived at a vast deep gulf resembling a tranquil lake; entering which, he beheld on the eastern side a village, the construction of which struck him with surprise. It consisted of twenty large houses shaped like bells and built on piles driven into the bottom of the lake, which in this part was limpid and of but little depth. Each house was provided with a drawbridge and with canoes by which the communication was carried on. From these resemblances to the Italian city, Ojeda gave to the bay the name of the Gulf of Venice; and it is called at the present day Venezuela, or Little Venice; the Indian name was Coquibacoa.

* Vespucci—Letter to Lorenzo de Pier Francisco de Medicis.

When the inhabitants beheld the ships standing into the bay, looking like wonderful and unknown apparitions from the deep, they fled with terror to their houses and raised the drawbridges. The Spaniards remained for a time gazing with admiration at this amphibious village, when a squadron of canoes entered the harbor from the sea. On beholding the ships they paused in mute amazement, and on the Spaniards attempting to approach them, paddled swiftly to shore and plunged into the forest. They soon returned with sixteen young girls, whom they conveyed in their canoes to the ships, distributing four on board of each, either as peace-offerings or as tokens of amity and confidence. The best of understanding now seemed to be established, and the inhabitants of the village came swarming about the ships in their canoes, and others swimming in great numbers from the shores.

The friendship of the savages however was all delusive. On a sudden, several old women at the doors of the houses uttered loud shrieks, tearing their hair in fury. It appeared to be a signal for hostility. The sixteen nymphs plunged into the sea and made for shore ; the Indians in the canoes caught up their bows and discharged a flight of arrows, and even those who were swimming brandished darts and

lances, which they had hitherto concealed beneath the water.

Ojeda was for a moment surprised at seeing war thus starting up on every side and the very sea bristling with weapons. Manning his boats, he charged among the thickest of the enemy, shattered and sunk several of their canoes, killed twenty Indians and wounded many more, and spread such a panic among them that most of the survivors flung themselves into the sea and swam to shore. Three of them were taken prisoners and two of the fugitive girls, and were conveyed on board of the ships, where the men were put in irons. One of them, however, and the two girls succeeded in dexterously escaping the same night.

Ojeda had but five men wounded in the affray, all of whom recovered. He visited the houses, but found them abandoned and destitute of booty; notwithstanding the unprovoked hostility of the inhabitants, he spared the buildings, that he might not cause useless irritation along the coast.

Continuing to explore the gulf, Ojeda penetrated to a port or harbor, to which he gave the name of St. Bartholomew, but which is supposed to be the same at present known by the original Indian name of Maracaibo. Here, in compliance with the entreaties of the na-

tives, he sent a detachment of twenty-seven Spaniards on a visit to the interior. For nine days they were conducted from town to town, and feasted and almost idolized by the Indians, who regarded them as angelic beings, performing their national dances and games, and chanting their traditional ballads for their entertainment.

The natives of this part were distinguished for the symmetry of their forms; the females in particular appeared to the Spaniards to surpass all they had yet beheld in the New World for grace and beauty. Neither did the men display in the least degree that jealousy which prevailed in the other parts of the coast; but, on the contrary, permitted the most frank and intimate intercourse with their wives and daughters.

By the time the Spaniards set out on their return to the ship, the whole country was aroused, pouring forth its population, male and female, to do them honor. Some bore them in litters or hammocks, that they might not be fatigued with the journey, and happy was the Indian who had the honor of bearing a Spaniard on his shoulders across a river. Others loaded themselves with the presents that had been bestowed on their guests, consisting of rich plumes, weapons of various kinds, and tropi-

cal birds and animals. In this way they returned in triumphant procession to the ships, the woods and shores resounding with their songs and shouts.

Many of the Indians crowded into the boats which took the detachment to the ships, others put off in canoes or swam from shore, so that in a little while the vessels were thronged with upwards of a thousand wondering natives. While gazing and marvelling at the strange objects around them, Ojeda ordered the cannon to be discharged, at the sound of which, says Vespucci, the Indians "plunged into the water like so many frogs from a bank." Perceiving however that it was done in harmless mirth, they returned on board, and passed the rest of the night in great festivity. The Spaniards brought away with them several of the beautiful and hospitable females from this place, one of whom, named by them Isabel, was much prized by Ojeda, and accompanied him in a subsequent voyage.*

* Navarrete, tom. iii., p. 8. *Idem*, pp. 107, 108.

It is worthy of particular mention that Ojeda, in his report of his voyage to the sovereigns, informed them of his having met with English voyagers in the vicinity of Coquibacoa, and that the Spanish government attached such importance to his information as to take measures to prevent any intrusion into those parts by the English. It is singular that no record

Chapter V.

PROSECUTION OF THE VOYAGE—RETURN TO SPAIN.

LEAVING the friendly port of Coquibacoa, Ojeda continued along the western shores of the gulf of Venezuela, and standing out to sea, and doubling Cape Maracaibo, he pursued his coasting voyage from port to port and promontory to promontory of this unknown continent, until he reached that long-stretching headland called Cape de la Vela. There the state of his vessels, and perhaps the disappointment of his hopes at not meeting with abundant source of immediate wealth, induced him to abandon all

should exist of this early and extensive expedition of English navigators. If it was undertaken in the service of the Crown, some documents might be found concerning it among the archives of the reign of Henry VII. The English had already discovered the continent of North America. This had been done in 1497, by John Cabot, a Venetian, accompanied by his son Sebastian, who was born in Bristol. They sailed under a license of Henry VII., who was to have a fifth of the profits of the voyage. On the 24th June they discovered Newfoundland, and afterwards coasted the continent quite to Florida, bringing back to England a valuable cargo and several of the natives. This was the first discovery of the mainland of America. The success of this expedition may have prompted the one which Ojeda encountered in the neighborhood of Coquibacoa.

further voyaging along the coast, and changing his course, he stood across the Caribbean Sea for Hispaniola. The tenor of his commission forbade his visiting that island; but Ojeda was not a man to stand upon trifles when his interest or inclination prompted the contrary. He trusted to excuse the infraction of his orders by the alleged necessity of touching at the island to calk and refit his vessels, and to procure provisions. His true object however is supposed to have been to cut dye-wood, which abounds in the western part of Hispaniola.

He accordingly anchored at Yaquimo in September, and landed with a large party of his men. Columbus at that time held command of the island, and hearing of this unlicensed intrusion, despatched Francisco Roldan, the quondam rebel, to call Ojeda to account. The contest of stratagem and management which took place between these two adroit and daring adventurers has been already detailed in the *History of Columbus*. Roldan was eventually successful, and Ojeda being obliged to leave Hispaniola, resumed his rambling voyage, visiting various islands, from whence he carried off numbers of the natives. He at length arrived at Cadiz in June, 1500, with his ships crowded with captives, whom he sold as slaves. So meagre, however, was the result of this ex-

pedition, that we are told, when all the expenses were deducted, but five hundred ducats remained to be divided between fifty-five adventurers. What made this result the more mortifying was, that a petty armament, which had sailed some time after that of Ojeda, had returned two months before him, rich with the spoils of the New World. A brief account of this latter expedition is necessary to connect this series of minor discoveries, which will be found to lead to enterprises and transactions of more stirring interest and importance.

PEDRO ALONZO NIÑO* AND CHRISTOVAL GUEVARA.

[1499.]

THE permission granted by Bishop Fonseca to Alonso de Ojeda to undertake a private expedition to the New World, roused the emulation of others of the followers of Columbus. Among these was Pedro Alonzo Niño, a hardy seaman, native of Moguer, in the vicinity of Palos, who had sailed with Columbus, as a pilot, in his first voyage, and also in his cruisings along the coasts of Cuba and Paria.† He soon obtained from the Bishop a similar license to that given to Ojeda, and like the latter, sought for some moneyed confederate among the rich merchants of Seville. One of these, named Luis

* Pronounced Ninyo. The ñ in Spanish is always pronounced as if followed by the letter *y*.

† Testimony of Bastides in the lawsuit of Diego Columbus.

Guevara, offered to fit out a caravel for the expedition; but on condition that his brother, Christoval Guevara, should have the command. The poverty of Niño compelled him to assent to the stipulations of the man of wealth, and he sailed as subaltern in his own enterprise. But his nautical skill and knowledge soon gained him the ascendency; he became virtually the captain, and ultimately enjoyed the whole credit of the voyage.

The bark of these two adventurers was but of fifty tons burden, and the crew thirty-three souls all told. With this slender armament they undertook to traverse unknown and dangerous seas, and to explore the barbarous shores of that vast continent recently discovered by Columbus:—such was the daring spirit of the Spanish voyagers of those days.

It was about the beginning of June, 1499, and but a few days after the departure of Ojeda, that they put to sea. They sailed from the little port of Palos, the cradle of American discovery, whose brave and skilful mariners long continued foremost in all enterprises to the New World. Being guided by the chart of Columbus, they followed his route, and reached the southern continent a little beyond Paria, about fifteen days after the same coast had been visited by Ojeda.

They then proceeded to the gulf of Paria, where they landed to cut dye-wood, and were amicably entertained by the natives. Shortly afterwards, sallying from the gulf by the Boca del Dragon, they encountered eighteen canoes of Caribs, the pirate rovers of these seas, and the terror of the bordering lands. This savage *armada*, instead of being daunted as usual by the sight of an European ship, with swelling sails, resembling some winged monster of the deep, considered it only as an object of plunder or hostility, and assailed it with showers of arrows. The sudden burst of artillery however from the sides of the caravel, and the havoc made by this seeming thunder, struck them with dismay, and they fled in all directions. The Spaniards succeeded in capturing one of the canoes, with one of the warriors who had manned it. In the bottom of the canoe lay an Indian prisoner, bound hand and foot. On being liberated he informed the Spaniards by signs that these Caribs had been on a marauding expedition along the neighboring coasts, shutting themselves up at night in a stockade which they carried with them, and issuing forth by day to plunder the villages and make captives. He had been one of seven prisoners; his companions had been devoured before his eyes at the cannibal banquets of these

savages, and he had been awaiting the same miserable fate. Honest Niño and his confederates were so indignant at this recital, that receiving it as established fact, they performed what they considered an act of equitable justice, by abandoning the Carib to the discretion of his late captive. The latter fell upon the defenceless warrior with fist and foot and cudgel; nor did his rage subside even after the breath had been mauled out of his victim, but, tearing the grim head from the body he placed it on a pole as a trophy of his vengeance.

Niño and his fellow-adventurers now steered for the island of Margarita, where they obtained a considerable quantity of pearls by barter. They afterwards skirted the opposite coast of Cumana, trading cautiously and shrewdly from port to port; sometimes remaining on board of their little bark and obliging the savages to come off to them, when the latter appeared too numerous; at other times venturing on shore and even into the interior. They were invariably treated with amity by the natives, who were perfectly naked, excepting that they were adorned with necklaces and bracelets of pearls. These they sometimes gave freely to the Spaniards, at other times they exchanged them for glass beads and other trinkets, and smiled at

the folly of the strangers in making such silly bargains.*

The Spaniards were struck with the grandeur and density of the forests along this coast; for in these regions of heat and moisture, vegetation appears in its utmost magnificence. They heard also the cries and roarings of wild and unknown animals in the woodlands, which however appeared not to be very dangerous, as the Indians went about the forest solely with bows and arrows. From meeting with deer and rabbits, they were convinced that that was a part of Terra Firma, not having found any animals of the kind on the island.†

Niño and Guevara were so well pleased with the hospitality of the natives of Cumana, and with the profitable traffic for pearls by which they obtained many of great size and beauty, that they remained upwards of three months on the coast.

They then proceeded westward to a country called Cauchieto, trading as usual for pearls and for the inferior kind of gold called guanin. At length they arrived at a number of houses and gardens situated on a river, and protected by a kind of fortress, the whole forming to the eyes of the Spaniards one of the most delicious abodes

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i., cap. 171.

† Navarrete, tom. iii., p. 14.

imaginable. They were about to land and enjoy the pleasures of this paradise, when they beheld upwards of a thousand Indians armed with bows and arrows and war-clubs preparing to give them a warm reception; having been probably incensed by the recent visit of Ojeda. As Niño and Guevara had not the fighting propensities of Ojeda, and were in quest of profit rather than renown, having moreover in all probability the fear of the rich merchant of Seville before their eyes, they prudently abstained from landing, and abandoning this hostile coast, returned forthwith to Cumana to resume their trade for pearls. They soon amassed a great number, many of which were equal in size and beauty to the most celebrated of the East, though they had been injured in boring from a want of proper implements.

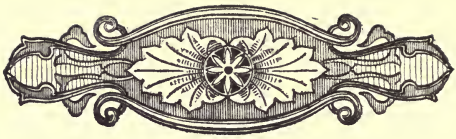
Satisfied with their success they now set sail for Spain, and piloted their little bark safely to Bayonne in Galicia, where they anchored about the middle of April, 1500, nearly two months before the arrival of Ojeda and his associates, La Cosa and Vespucci.*

The most successful voyagers to the New World were doomed to trouble from their very success. The ample amount of pearls paid to

* Peter Martyr. Other historians give a different date for their arrival. Herrera says Feb. 6th.

the treasury, as the royal portion of the profits of this expedition, drew suspicion instead of favor upon the two adventurers. They were accused of having concealed a great part of the pearls collected by them, thus defrauding their companions and the Crown. Pedro Alonzo Niña was actually thrown into prison on this accusation, but nothing being proved against him, he was eventually set free, and enjoyed the enviable reputation of having performed the richest voyage that had yet been made to the New World.*

* Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. iii., p. 11. Herrera, decad. i., lib. iv., cap. 5.



VICENTE YAÑEZ PINZON.

AMONG the maritime adventurers of renown who were roused to action by the licenses granted for private expeditions of discovery, we find conspicuous the name of Vicente Yañez Pinzon, of Palos, one of the three brave brothers who aided Columbus in his first voyage, and risked life and fortune with him in his doubtful and perilous enterprise.

Of Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the eldest and most important of these three brothers, particular mention has been made in the *History of Columbus*, and of the unfortunate error in conduct which severed him from the Admiral, brought on him the displeasure of the sovereigns, and probably contributed to his premature and melancholy death.

Whatever cloud this may have thrown over his family, it was but temporary. The death of Martin Alonzo, as usual, atoned for his faults,

and his good deeds lived after him. The merits and services of himself and his brothers were acknowledged, and the survivors of the family were restored to royal confidence. A feeling of jealous hostility prevented them from taking a part in the subsequent voyages of Columbus, but the moment the door was thrown open for individual enterprise, they pressed forward for permission to engage in it at their own risk and expense—and it was readily granted. In fact, their supposed hostility to Columbus was one of the surest recommendations to the favor of Bishop Fonseca, by whom the license was issued for their expedition.

Vicente Yañez Pinzon was the leader of this new enterprise, and he was accompanied by two nephews, Arias Perez and Diego Fernandez, sons of his late brother Martin Alonzo Pinzon. Several of his sailors had sailed with Columbus in his recent voyage to Paria, as had also his three principal pilots, Juan Quintero, Juan de Umbria, and Juan de Jerez. Thus these minor voyages seemed all to emanate from the great expeditions of Columbus, and to aim at realizing the ideas and speculations contained in the papers transmitted by him to Spain.

The armament consisted of four caravels, and was fitted out at the port of Palos. The

funds of Vicente Yañez were completely exhausted before he had fitted out his little squadron; he was obliged therefore to purchase on credit the sea-stores and articles of traffic necessary for the enterprise. The merchants of Palos seem to have known how to profit by the careless nature of sailors and the sanguine spirit of discoverers. In their bargains they charged honest Pinzon eighty and a hundred per cent. above the market value of their merchandise, and in the hurry and urgency of the moment he was obliged to submit to the imposition.*

The squadron put to sea in the beginning of December, 1499, and after passing the Canary and Cape Verde Islands, stood to the southwest. Having sailed about seven hundred leagues, they crossed the equator and lost sight of the north star. They had scarcely passed the equinoctial line when they encountered a terrible tempest, which had wellnigh swallowed up their slender barks. The storm passed away, and the firmament was again serene; but the mariners remained tossing about in confusion; dismayed by the turbulence of the waves and the strange aspect of the heavens. They looked in vain to the south for some polar

* Navarrete, vol. iii. See doc. No. 7, where Vicente Yañez Pinzon petitions for redress.

star by which to shape their course, and fancied that some swelling prominence of the globe concealed it from their view. They knew nothing as yet of the firmament of that hemisphere, nor of that beautiful constellation, the southern cross, but expected to find a guiding star at the opposite pole, similar to the cynosure of the north.

Pinzon, however, who was of an intrepid spirit, pursued his course resolutely to the west, and after sailing about two hundred and forty leagues, and being in the eighth degree of southern latitude, he beheld land afar off on the 28th of January, to which he gave the name of Santa Maria de la Consolacion, from the sight of it having consoled him in the midst of doubts and perplexities. It is now called Cape St. Augustine, and forms the most prominent part of the immense empire of Brazil.

The sea was turbid and discolored as in rivers, and on sounding they had sixteen fathoms water. Pinzon landed, accompanied by a notary and witnesses, and took formal possession of the territory for the Castilian Crown; no one appeared to dispute his pretensions, but he observed on the beach the print of footsteps, of gigantic size.

At night there were fires lighted upon a neighboring part of the coast, which induced

Pinzon on the following morning to send forty men well armed to the spot. A band of Indians of about equal number sallied forth to encounter them, armed with bows and arrows, and seemingly of extraordinary stature. A still greater number were seen in the distance, hastening to the support of their companions. The Indians arrayed themselves for combat, and the two parties remained for a short time eying each other with mutual curiosity and distrust. The Spaniards now displayed looking-glasses, beads, and other trinkets, and jingled strings of hawk's-bells, in general so captivating to an Indian ear; but the haughty savages treated all their overtures with contempt, regarding these offerings carelessly for a short time, and then stalking off with stoic gravity. They were ferocious of feature, and apparently warlike in disposition, and are supposed to have been a wandering race of unusual size, who roamed about in the night, and were of the most fierce and untractable nature. By nightfall there was not an Indian to be seen in the neighborhood.

Discouraged by the inhospitable character of the coast, Pinzon made sail and stood to the northwest, until he came to the mouth of a river too shallow to receive his ships. Here he sent his boats on shore with a number of

men well armed. They landed on the river banks, and beheld a multitude of naked Indians on a neighboring hill. A single Spaniard, armed simply with sword and buckler, was sent to invite them to friendly intercourse. He approached them with signs of amity, and threw to them a hawk's-bell. They replied to him with similar signs, and threw to him a small gilded wand. The soldier stooped to pick it up, when suddenly a troop of savages rushed down to seize him; he threw himself immediately upon the defensive with sword and target, and though but a small man, and far from robust, handled his weapons with such dexterity and fierceness that he kept the savages at bay, making a clear circle round him, and wounding several who attempted to break it. His unlooked-for prowess surprised and confounded his assailants, and gave time for his comrades to come to his assistance. The Indians then made a general assault, with such a galling discharge of darts and arrows, that almost immediately eight or ten Spaniards were slain, and many more wounded. The latter were compelled to retreat to their boats, disputing every inch of ground. The Indians pursued them even into the water, surrounding the boats and seizing hold of the oars. The Spaniards made a desperate defence, thrusting

many through with their lances, and cutting down and ripping up others with their swords; but such was the ferocity of the survivors, that they persisted in their attack until they overpowered the crew of one of the boats, and bore it off in triumph. With this they retired from combat, and the Spaniards returned defeated and disheartened to their ships, having met with the roughest reception that the Europeans had yet experienced in the New World.

Pinzon now stood forty leagues to the northwest, until he arrived in the neighborhood of the equinoctial line. Here he found the water of the sea so fresh that he was enabled to replenish his casks with it. Astonished with so singular a phenomenon, he stood in for the land, and arrived among a number of fresh and verdant islands, inhabited by a gentle and hospitable race of people, gaily painted, who came off to the ships with the most frank and fearless confidence. Pinzon soon found that these islands lay in the mouth of an immense river, more than thirty leagues in breadth, the water of which entered upward of forty leagues into the sea before losing its sweetness. It was, in fact, the renowned Marañon, since known as the Orellana and the Amazon. While lying in the mouth of this river, there was a sudden swelling of the stream, which, being opposed

by the current of the sea, and straightened by the narrow channels of the islands, rose more than five fathoms, with mountain waves, and a tremendous noise, threatening the destruction of the ships. Pinzon extricated his little squadron with great difficulty, and finding there was but little gold, nor anything else of value to be found among the simple natives, he requited their hospitality, in the mode too common among the early discoverers, by carrying off thirty-six of them captive.

Having gained the sight of the polar star, Pinzon pursued his course along the coast, passing the mouths of the Oroonoko, and entering the gulf of Paria, where he landed and cut brazil-wood. Sallying forth by the Boca del Dragon, he reached the island of Hispaniola about the 23d of June, whence he sailed for the Bahamas. Here in the month of July, while at anchor, there came such a tremendous hurricane that two of the caravels were swallowed up with all their crews in the sight of their terrified companions ; a third parted her cables and was driven out to sea, while the fourth was so furiously beaten by the tempest that the crew threw themselves into the boats and made for shore. Here they found a few naked Indians, who offered them no molestation ; but, fearing that they might spread the tidings of a hand-

ful of shipwrecked Spaniards being upon the coast, and thus bring the savages of the neighboring islands upon them, a council of war was held, whether it would not be a wise precaution to put these Indians to death. Fortunately for the latter, the vessel which had been driven from her anchors returned, and put an end to the alarm, and to the council of war. The other caravel also rode out the storm uninjured, and the sea subsiding, the Spaniards returned on board, and made the best of their way to the island of Hispaniola. Having repaired the damages sustained in the gale, they again made sail for Spain, and came to anchor in the river before Palos, about the end of September.

Thus ended one of the most checkered and disastrous voyages yet made to the New World. Yañez Pinzon had lost two of his ships and many of his men ; what made the loss of the latter more grievous was that they had been enlisted from among his neighbors, his friends, and relatives. In fact, the expeditions to the New World must have realized the terrors and apprehensions of the people of Palos, by filling that little community with widows and orphans. When the rich merchants, who had sold goods to Pinzon at a hundred per cent. advance, beheld him return in this sorry condition, with two shattered barks, and a handful of poor,

weather-beaten seamen, they began to tremble for their money. No sooner, therefore, had he and his nephews departed to Granada, to give an account of their discoveries to the sover-

CHRISTOPHORO COLOMBO

THE CAPRIOLO PORTRAIT.

eigns, than the merchants seized upon their caravels and cargoes and began to sell them to repay themselves. Honest Pinzon immediately addressed a petition to the government,

stating the imposition practised upon him, and the danger he was in of imprisonment and utter ruin should his creditors be allowed to sacrifice his goods at a public sale. He petitioned that they might be compelled to return the property thus seized, and that he might be enabled to sell three hundred and fifty quintils of brazil-wood, which he had brought back with him, and which would be sufficient to satisfy the demands of his creditors. The sovereigns granted his prayer. They issued an order to the civil authorities of Palos to interfere in the matter, with all possible promptness and brevity, allowing no vexatious delay, and administering justice so impartially that neither of the parties should have cause to complain.

Pinzon escaped from the fangs of his creditors, but, of course, must have suffered in purse from the expenses of the law ; which, in Spain, is apt to bury even a successful client under an overwhelming mountain of documents and writings. We infer this in respect to Pinzon from a royal order issued in the following year, allowing him to export a quantity of grain, in consideration of the heavy losses he had sustained in his voyage of discovery.* He did but share the usual lot of the

* On the 5th of September, 1501, a royal permission

Spanish discoverers, whose golden anticipations too frequently ended in penury; but he is distinguished from among the crowd of them

was given to Vicente Yañez Pinzon to colonize and govern the lands he had discovered, beginning a little north of the river Amazon, and extending to Cape St. Augustine. The object of the government in this permission was to establish an outpost and a resolute commander on this southern frontier, to check any intrusion the Portuguese might make in consequence of the accidental discovery of a part of the coast of Brazil by Pedro Alvarez Cabral, in 1500. The subsequent arrangement of a partition line between the two countries prevented the necessity of this precaution, and it does not appear that Vicente Yañez Pinzon made any second voyage to those parts.

In 1506 he undertook an expedition in company with Juan Diaz de Solis, a native of Lebrija, the objects of which was to endeavor to find the strait or passage supposed by Columbus to lead from the Atlantic to a southern ocean. It was necessarily without success, as was also another voyage made by them for the same purpose in 1508. As no such passage exists, no blame could attach to those able navigators for being foiled in the object of their search.

In consequence of the distinguished merits and services of the Pinzon family, they were raised by the Emperor Charles V. to the dignity of a *Hidalguia* or nobility, without any express title, and a coat-of-arms was granted them, on which were emblazoned three caravels, with a hand at the stern pointing to an island covered with savages. This coat-of-arms is still

by being the first European who crossed the equinoctial line, on the western ocean, and by discovering the great kingdom of Brazil.

maintained by the family, who have added to it the motto granted to Columbus, merely substituting the name of Pinzon for that of the Admiral,

A Castile y a Leon,
Nuevo Mundo dio Pinzon.

DIEGO DE LEPE AND RODRIGO DE BASTIDES.

[1500.]

NOTWITHSTANDING the hardships and disasters that had beset the voyagers to the New World, and the penury in which their golden anticipations had too frequently terminated, adventurers continued to press forward, excited by fresh reports of newly discovered regions, each in its turn represented as the real land of promise. Scarcely had Vicente Yañez Pinzon departed on the voyage recently narrated, when his townsman Diego de Lepe likewise set sail with two vessels from the busy little port of Palos, on a like expedition. No particulars of importance are known of this voyage, excepting that Lepe doubled Cape St. Augustine, and beheld the southern continent stretching far to the southwest. On returning

to Spain, he drew a chart of the coast for the Bishop Fonseca, and enjoyed the reputation, for upwards of ten years afterwards, of having extended his discoveries farther south than any other voyager.

Another contemporary adventurer to the New World was Rodrigo de Bastides, a wealthy notary of Triana, the suburb of Seville, inhabited by the maritime part of its population. Being sanctioned by the sovereigns, to whom he engaged to yield a fourth of his profits, he fitted out two caravels in October, 1500, to go in quest of gold and pearls.

Prudently distrusting his own judgment in nautical matters, this adventurous notary associated with him the veteran pilot Juan de la Cosa, the same hardy Biscayan who had sailed with Columbus and Ojeda. A general outline of their voyage has already been given in the *Life of Columbus;* it extended the discoveries of the coast of Terra Firma from Cape de la Vela where Ojeda had left off, quite to the port of Nombre de Dios.

Bastides distinguished himself from the mass of discoverers, by his kind treatment of the natives, and Juan de la Cosa by his sound discretion and his able seamanship. Their voyage had been extremely successful, and they had collected, by barter, a great amount of gold

and pearls, when their prosperous career was checked by an unlooked-for evil. Their vessels, to their surprise, became leaky in every part, and they discovered to their dismay that the bottoms were pierced in innumerable places by the *broma*, or worm, which abounds in the waters of the torrid zone, but of which they, as yet, had scarcely any knowledge. It was with great difficulty they could keep afloat until they reached a small inlet on the coast of Hispaniola. Here they repaired their ships as well as they were able, and again put to sea to return to Cadiz. A succession of gales drove them back to port; the ravages of the worms continued, the leaks broke out afresh; they landed the most portable and precious part of their wealthy cargoes, and the vessels foundered with the remainder. Bastides lost, moreover, the arms and ammunition saved from the wreck, being obliged to destroy them lest they should fall into the hands of the Indians.

Distributing his men into three bands, two of them headed by La Cosa and himself, they set off for San Domingo by three several routes, as the country was not able to furnish provisions for so large a body. Each band was provided with a coffer stored with trinkets and other articles of Indian traffic, with which to buy provisions on the road.

Francisco de Bobadilla, the wrong-headed oppressor and superseder of Columbus, was at the time governor of San Domingo. The report reached him that a crew of adventurers had landed on the island, and were marching through the country in three bands, each provided with a coffer of gold, and carrying on illicit trade with the natives. The moment Bastides made his appearance, therefore, he was seized and thrown into prison, and an investigation commenced. In his defence he maintained that his only traffic with the natives was for the purpose of procuring provisions for his followers, or guides for his journey. It was determined however to send him to Spain for trial, with the written testimony and the other documents of his examination.

He was accordingly conveyed in the same fleet in which Bobadilla embarked for Spain, and which experienced such an awful shipwreck in the sight of Columbus. The ship of Rodrigo Bastides was one of the few which outlived the tempest ; it arrived safe at Cadiz in September, 1502. Bastides was ultimately acquitted of the charges advanced against him. So lucrative had been his voyage, that, notwithstanding the losses sustained by the foundering of his vessels, he was enabled to pay a large sum to the Crown as a fourth of his

Natives of Brazil Engaged in a Cannibal Feast

From Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

profits, and to retain a great amount for himself. In reward of his services and discoveries the sovereigns granted him an annual revenue for life, to arise from the proceeds of the province of Uraba, which he had discovered. An equal pension was likewise assigned to the hardy Juan de la Cosa, to result from the same territory, of which he was appointed alguazil mayor.* Such was the economical generosity of King Ferdinand, who rewarded the past toils of his adventurous discoverers out of the expected produce of their future labors.

* Navarrete, *Colec.*, tom. iii.

SECOND VOYAGE OF ALONSO DE OJEDA.

[1502.]

THE first voyage of Alonso de Ojeda to the coast of Paria, and its meagre termination in June, 1500, has been related. He gained nothing in wealth by that expedition, but he added to his celebrity as a bold and skilful adventurer. His youthful fire, his sanguine and swelling spirit, and the wonderful stories told of his activity and prowess, made him extremely popular, so that his patron, the Bishop Fonseca, found it an easy matter to secure for him the royal favor. In consideration of his past services and of others expected from him, a grant was made to him of six leagues of land on the southern part of Hispaniola, and the government of the province of Coquibacoa, which he had discovered. He was furthermore authorized to fit out any

number of ships, not exceeding ten, at his own expense, and to prosecute the discovery of the coast of Terra Firma. He was not to touch or traffic on the pearl coast of Paria; extending as far as a bay in the vicinity of the island of Margarita. Beyond this he had a right to trade in all kinds of merchandise, whether of pearls, jewels, metals, or precious stones; paying one fifth of the profits to the Crown, and abstaining from making slaves of the Indians without a special license from the sovereigns. He was to colonize Coquibacoa, and, as a recompense, was to enjoy one half of the proceeds of his territory, provided the half did not exceed 300,000 *maravedis;* all beyond that amount was to go to the Crown.

A principal reason, however, for granting this government and these privileges to Ojeda was that, in his previous voyage he had met with English adventurers on a voyage of discovery in the neighborhood of Coquibacoa, at which the jealousy of the sovereigns had taken the alarm. They were anxious therefore to establish a resolute and fighting commander like Ojeda upon this outpost, and they instructed him to set up the arms of Castile and Leon in every place he visited, as a signal of discovery and possession, and to put a stop to the intrusions of the English.*

* Navarrete, tom. iii., document x.

With this commission in his pocket, and the government of an Indian territory in the perspective, Ojeda soon found associates to aid him in fitting out an armament. These were Juan de Vergara, a servant of a rich canon of the Cathedral of Seville, and Garcia del Campo, commonly called Ocampo. They made a contract of partnership to last for two years, according to which the expenses and profits of the expedition and of the government of Coquibacoa were to be shared equally between them. The purses of the confederates were not ample enough to afford ten ships, but they fitted out four. 1st, The *Santa Maria de la Antigua*, commanded by Garcia del Campo; 2d, The *Santa Maria de la Granada*, commanded by Juan de Vergara; 3d, the caravel *Magdalena*, commanded by Pedro de Ojeda, nephew to Alonso; and 4th, the caravel *Santa Ana*, commanded by Hernando de Guevara. The whole was under the command of Alonso de Ojeda. The expedition set sail in 1502, touched at the Canaries, according to custom, to take in provisions, and then proceeded westward for the shores of the New World.

After traversing the gulf of Paria, and before reaching the island of Margarita, the caravel *Santa Ana*, commanded by Hernando de Guevara, was separated from them, and

for several days the ships were mutually seeking each other in these silent and trackless seas. After they were all reunited they found their provisions growing scanty, they landed therefore at a part of the coast called Cumana by the natives, but to which, from its beauty and fertility, Ojeda gave the name of Valfermosa. While foraging here for their immediate supplies, the idea occurred to Ojeda that he should want furniture and utensils of all kinds for his proposed colony, and that it would be better to pillage them from a country where he was a mere transient visitor, than to wrest them from his neighbors in the territory where he was to set up his government. His companions were struck with the policy if not the justice of this idea, and they all set to work to carry it into execution. Dispersing themselves therefore in ambush in various directions, they at a concerted signal rushed forth from their concealment and set upon the natives. Ojeda had issued orders to do as little injury and damage as possible, and on no account to destroy the habitations of the Indians. His followers, however, in their great zeal, transcended his orders. Seven or eight Indians were killed and many wounded in the skirmish which took place, and a number of their cabins were

wrapped in flames. A great quantity of hammocks, of cotton, and of utensils of various kinds, fell into the hands of the conquerors; they also captured several female Indians, some of whom were ransomed with the kind of gold called guanin; some were retained by Vergara for himself and his friend Ocampo, others were distributed among the crews, the rest, probably the old and ugly, were set at liberty. As to Ojeda, he reserved nothing for himself of the spoil excepting a single hammock.

The ransom paid by the poor Indians for some of their effects and some of their women, yielded the Spaniards a trifling quantity of gold, but they found the place destitute of provisions, and Ojeda was obliged to despatch Vergara in a caravel to the island of Jamaica to forage for supplies, with instructions to rejoin him at Maracaibo or Cape de la Vela.

Ojeda at length arrived at Coquibacoa, at the port destined for his seat of government. He found the country however so poor and sterile, that he proceeded along the coast to a bay, which he named Santa Cruz, but which is supposed to be the same at present called Bahia Honda, where he found a Spaniard who had been left in the province of Citarma by Bastides in his late voyage, about thirteen

months before, and had remained ever since among the Indians, so that he had acquired their language.

Ojeda determined to form his settlement at this place; but the natives seemed disposed to defend their territory, for, the moment a party landed to procure water, they were assailed by a galling shower of arrows, and driven back to the ships. Upon this Ojeda landed with all his force, and struck such terror into the Indians, that they came forward with signs of amity, and brought a considerable quantity of gold as a peace-offering, which was graciously accepted.

Ojeda, with the concurrence of his associates, now set to work to establish a settlement, cutting down trees, and commencing a fortress. They had scarce begun, when they were attacked by a neighboring cacique, but Ojeda sallied forth upon him with such intrepidity and effect as not merely to defeat, but to drive him from the neighborhood. He then proceeded quietly to finish his fortress, which was defended by bombards, and contained the magazine of provisions, and the treasure amassed in the expedition. The provisions were dealt out twice a day, under the inspection of proper officers; the treasure, gained by barter, by ransom, or by plunder, was deposited in a strong

box secured by two locks, one key being kept by the royal supervisor, the other by Ocampo.

In the meantime provisions became scarce. The Indians never appeared in the neighborhood of the fortress, except to harass it with repeated though ineffectual assaults. Vergara did not appear with the expected supplies from Jamaica, and a caravel was despatched in search of him. The people, worn out with labor and privations of various kinds, and disgusted with the situation of the settlement, which was in a poor and unhealthy country, grew discontented and factious. They began to fear that they should lose the means of departing, as their vessels were in danger of being destroyed by the *broma* or worm. Ojeda led them forth repeatedly upon foraging parties about the adjacent country, and collected some provisions and booty in the Indian villages. The provisions he deposited in the magazine, part of the spoils he divided among his followers, and the gold he locked up in the strong box, the keys of which he took possession of, to the great displeasure of the supervisor and his associate Ocampo. The murmurs of the people grew loud as their sufferings increased. They insinuated that Ojeda had no authority over this part of the coast, having passed the boundaries of his government, and formed his

settlement in the country discovered by Bastides. By the time Vergara had arrived from Jamaica the factions of this petty colony had risen to an alarming height. Ocampo had a personal enmity to the governor, arising probably from some feud about the strong box; being a particular friend of Vergara, he held a private conference with him, and laid a plan to entrap the doughty Ojeda. In pursuance of this, the latter was invited on board of the caravel of Vergara, to see the provisions he had brought from Jamaica; but no sooner was he on board than they charged him with having transgressed the limits of his government, with having provoked the hostility of the Indians, and heedlessly sacrificed the lives of his followers, above all, having taken possession of the strong box, in contempt of the authority of the royal supervisor, and with the intention of appropriating to himself all the gains of the enterprise. They informed him, therefore, of their intention to convey him a prisoner to Hispaniola, to answer to the Governor for his offences. Ojeda, finding himself thus entrapped, proposed to Vergara and Ocampo that they should return to Spain with such of the crews as chose to accompany them, leaving him with the remainder to prosecute his enterprise. The two recreant partners at first consented, for

they were disgusted with the enterprise, which offered little profit and severe hardships. They agreed to leave Ojeda the smallest of the caravels, with a third of the provisions and of their gains, and to build a row-boat for him. They actually began to labor upon the boat. Before ten days had elapsed however, they repented of their arrangement; the ship-carpenters were ill, there were no calkers, and moreover, they recollected that as Ojeda, according to their representations, was a defaulter to the Crown, they would be liable as his sureties, should they return to Spain without him. They concluded, therefore, that the wisest plan was to give him nothing, but to carry him off prisoner.

When Ojeda learned the determination of his wary partners, he attempted to make his escape and get off to San Domingo; but he was seized, thrown in irons, and conveyed on board of the caravel. The two partners then set sail from Santa Cruz, bearing off the whole community, its captive governor, and the litigated strong box.

They put to sea about the beginning of September, and arrived at the western part of the island of Hispaniola. While at anchor, within a stone's throw of the land, Ojeda, confident in his strength and skill as a swimmer, let himself quietly slide down the side of the ship into the

water during the night, and attempted to swim for the shore. His arms were free but his feet were shackled, and the weight of his irons threatened to sink him. He was obliged to shout for help; a boat was sent from the vessel to his relief, and the unfortunate governor was brought back half drowned to his unrelenting partner.*

The latter now landed, and delivered their prisoners into the hands of Gallego, the commander of the place, to be put at the disposal of the governor of the island. In the meantime, the strong box, which appears to have been at the bottom of all these feuds, remained in the possession of Vergara and Ocampo, who, Ojeda says, took from it whatever they thought proper, without regard to the royal dues, or the consent of the royal supervisor. They were all together, prisoner and accusers, in the city of San Domingo, about the end of September, 1502, when the chief judge of the island, after hearing both parties, gave a verdict against Ojeda, that stripped him of all his effects, and brought him into debt to the Crown for the royal proportion of the profits of the voyage. Ojeda appealed to the sovereign, and, after some time, was honorably acquitted by the royal council from all the charges; and a mandate

* *Hist. Gen. de Viages.* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*

was issued in 1503, ordering a restitution of his property. It appears however, that the cost of justice, or rather of the law, consumed his share of the treasure of the strong box, and that a royal order was necessary to liberate him from the hands of the Governor; so that like too many other litigants, he finally emerged from the labyrinths of the law a triumphant client, but a ruined man.

THIRD VOYAGE OF ALONSO DE OJEDA.

Chapter I.

OJEDA APPLIES FOR A COMMAND—HAS A RIVAL CANDIDATE IN DIEGO DE NICUESA—HIS SUCCESS.

FOR several years after his ruinous, though successful lawsuit, we lose all traces of Alonso de Ojeda, excepting that we are told he made another voyage to the vicinity of Coquibacoa in 1505. No record remains of this expedition, which seems to have been equally unprofitable with the preceding, for we find him in 1508 in the island of Hispaniola, as poor in purse though as proud in spirit as ever. In fact, however fortune might have favored him, he had a heedless, squandering disposition that would always have kept him poor.

About this time the cupidity of King Ferdinand was greatly excited by the accounts given

by Columbus of the gold mines of Veragua, in which the Admiral fancied he had discovered the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients, whence King Solomon procured the gold used in building the temple of Jerusalem. Subsequent voyagers had corroborated the opinion of Columbus as to the general riches of the coast of Terra Firma; King Ferdinand resolved therefore to found regular colonies along that coast, and to place the whole under some capable commander. A project of the kind had been conceived by Columbus when he discovered that region in the course of his last voyage, and the reader may remember the disasters experienced by his brother Don Bartholomew and himself in endeavoring to establish a colony on the hostile shores of Veragua. The Admiral being dead, the person who should naturally have presented himself to the mind of the sovereign for this particular service was Don Bartholomew; but the wary and selfish monarch knew the Adelantado to be as lofty in his terms as his late brother, and preferred to accomplish his purpose by cheaper agents. He was unwilling also to increase the consequence of a family, whose vast but just claims were already a cause of repining to his sordid and jealous spirit. He looked round therefore among the crowd of adventurers who had sprung up in the school

of Columbus, for some individual ready to serve him on more accommodating terms. Among these, considered by their friends as most fitted for this purpose, was Alonso de Ojeda, for his roving voyages and daring exploits had made him famous among the voyagers; and it was thought that an application on his part would be attended with success, as he possessed a stanch friend at court in the Bishop Fonseca. Unfortunately he was too far distant to urge his suit with the Bishop, and what was worse, he was destitute of money. At this juncture there happened to be at Hispaniola the veteran navigator and pilot, Juan de la Cosa, who was a kind of Nestor in all nautical affairs.* The hardy Biscayan had sailed with Ojeda and had

* Peter Martyr gives the following weighty testimony to the knowledge and skill of this excellent seaman: "Of the Spaniards, as many as thought themselves to have any knowledge of what pertained to measure the land and sea, drew cardes [charts] on parchment as concerning these navigations. Of all others they most esteem them which Juan de la Cosa, the companion of Ojeda, and another pilot called Andrew Morales, had set forth, and this, as well for the great experience which both had (*to whom these tracks were as well known as the chambers of their own house*) as also that they were thought to be cunninger in that part of cosmography which teacheth the description and measuring of the sea." P. Martyr, decad. ii., cap. 10.

conceived a great opinion of the courage and talents of the youthful adventurer. He had contrived also to fill his purse in the course of his cruising, and now, in the generous spirit of a sailor, offered to aid Ojeda with it in the prosecution of his wishes.

His offer was gladly accepted; it was agreed that Juan de la Cosa should depart for Spain to promote the appointment of Ojeda to the command of Terra Firma, and in case of success, should fit out with his own funds the necessary armament.

La Cosa departed on his embassy; he called on the Bishop Fonseca, who, as had been expected, entered warmly into the views of his favorite Ojeda, and recommended him to the ambitious and bigot king, as a man well fitted to promote the empire in the wilderness and to dispense the blessings of Christianity among the savages.

The recommendation of the Bishop was usually effectual in the affairs of the New World, and the opinion of the veteran De la Cosa had great weight even with the sovereign; but a rival candidate to Ojeda had presented himself, and one who had the advantages of higher connections and greater pecuniary means. This was Diego de Nicuesa, an accomplished courtier of noble birth, who had filled the post of

grand carver to Don Enrique Enriquez, uncle of the King. Nature, education, and habit combined to form Nicuesa a complete rival of Ojeda. Like him, he was small of stature, but remarkable for symmetry and compactness of form and for bodily strength and activity; like him he was master at all kinds of weapons, and skilled, not merely in feats of agility, but in those graceful and chivalrous exercises, which the Spanish cavaliers of those days inherited from the Moors; being noted for his vigor and address in the jousts or tilting-matches after the Moresco fashion. Ojeda himself could not surpass him in feats of horsemanship, and particular mention is made of a favorite mare, which he could make caper and caracole in strict cadence to the sound of a viol; besides all this, he was versed in the legendary ballads or romances of his country, and was renowned as a capital performer on the guitar! Such were the qualifications of this candidate for a command in the wilderness, as enumerated by the reverend Bishop Las Casas. It is probable however that he had given evidence of qualities more adapted to the desired post; having already been out to Hispaniola in the military train of the late Governor Ovando.

Where merits were so singularly balanced as those of Ojeda and Nicuesa, it might have been

difficult to decide; King Ferdinand avoided the dilemma by favoring both; not indeed by furnishing them with ships and money, but by granting patents and dignities, which cost nothing and might bring rich returns. He divided that part of the continent which lies along the Isthmus of Darien into two provinces, the boundary line running through the gulf of Uraba. The eastern part, extending to Cape de la Vela, was called New Andalusia, and the government of it given to Ojeda. The other to the west, including Veragua, and reaching to Cape Gracias à Dios, was assigned to Nicuesa. The island of Jamaica was given to the two governors in common, as a place whence to draw supplies of provisions. Each of the governors was to erect two fortresses in his district, and to enjoy for ten years the profits of all mines he should discover, paying to the Crown one tenth part the first year, one ninth the second, one eight the third, one seventh the fourth, and one fifth in each of the remaining years.

Juan de la Cosa, who had been indefatigable in promoting the suit of Ojeda, was appointed his lieutenant in the government, with the post of alguazil mayor of the province. He immediately freighted a ship and two brigantines, in which he embarked with about two hundred men. It was a slender armament, but the purse

of the honest voyager was not very deep, and that of Ojeda was empty. Nicuesa, having ample means, armed four large vessels and two brigantines, furnished them with abundant munitions and supplies, both for the voyage and the projected colony, enlisted a much greater force, and set sail in gay and vaunting style for the golden shores of Veragua, the Aurea Chersonesus of his imagination.

Chapter III.

FEUD BETWEEN THE RIVAL GOVERNORS OJEDA AND NICUESA—A CHALLENGE.

[1509.]

THE two rival armaments arrived at San Domingo about the same time. Nicuesa had experienced what was doubtless considered a pleasant little turn of fortune by the way. Touching at Santa Cruz, one of the Caribbee Islands, he had succeeded in capturing a hundred of the natives, whom he had borne off in his ships to be sold as slaves at Hispaniola. This was deemed justifiable in those days, even by the most scrupulous divines, from the belief that the Caribs were all anthropophagi, or man-eaters; fortunately the opinion of mankind, in this more enlightened age,

makes but little difference in atrocity between the cannibal and the kidnapper.

Alonso de Ojeda welcomed with joy the arrival of his nautical friend and future lieutenant in the government, the worthy Juan de la Cosa; still he could not but feel some mortification at the inferiority of his armament to that of his rival Nicuesa, whose stately ships rode proudly at anchor in the harbor of San Domingo. He felt, too, that his means were inadequate to the establishment of his intended colony. Ojeda, however, was not long at a loss for pecuniary assistance. Like many free-spirited men, who are careless and squandering of their own purses, he had a facility in commanding the purses of his neighbors. Among the motley population of San Domingo there was a lawyer of some ability, the bachelor Martin Fernandez de Enciso, who had made two thousand *castillanos* by his pleading *; for it would appear that the spirit of litigation was one of the first fruits of civilized life transplanted to the New World, and flourished surprisingly among the Spanish colonists.

Alonso de Ojeda became acquainted with the Bachelor, and finding him to be of a restless and speculative character, soon succeeded in inspiring him with a contempt for the dull but

* Equivalent to ten thousand and fifty dollars of the present day.

secure and profitable routine of his office in San Domingo, and imbuing him with his own passion for adventure. Above all he dazzled him with the offer to make him alcalde mayor, or chief judge of the provincial government he was about to establish in the wilderness.

In an evil hour the aspiring Bachelor yielded to the temptation, and agreed to invest all his money in the enterprise. It was arranged that Ojeda should depart with the armament which had arrived from Spain, while the Bachelor should remain at Hispaniola to beat up for recruits and provide supplies; with these he was to embark in a ship purchased by himself, and proceed to join his high-mettled friend at the seat of his intended colony. Two rival governors, so well matched as Ojeda and Nicuesa, and both possessed of swelling spirits, pent up in small but active bodies, could not remain long in a little place like San Domingo without some collision. The island of Jamaica, which had been assigned to them in common, furnished the first ground of contention; the province of Darien furnished another, each pretending to include it within the limits of his jurisdiction. Their disputes on these points ran so high that the whole place resounded with them. In talking, however, Nicuesa had the advantage; having been brought up in the court, he was more polished

and ceremonious, had greater self-command, and probably perplexed his rival governor in argument. Ojeda was no great casuist, but he was an excellent swordsman, and always ready to fight his way through any question of right or dignity which he could not clearly argue with the tongue; so he proposed to settle the dispute by single combat. Nicuesa, though equally brave, was more a man of the world, and saw the folly of such arbitrament. Secretly smiling at the heat of his antagonist, he proposed as a preliminary to the duel, and to furnish something worth fighting for, that each should deposit five thousand *castillanos*, to be the prize of the victor. This, as he foresaw, was a temporary check upon the fiery valor of his rival, who did not possess a *pistole* in his treasury; but probably was too proud to confess it.

It is not likely however that the impetuous spirit of Ojeda would long have remained in check, had not the discreet Juan de la Cosa interposed to calm it. It is interesting to notice the great ascendency possessed by this veteran navigator over his fiery associate. Juan de la Cosa was a man whose strong natural good sense had been quickened by long and hard experience; whose courage was above all question, but tempered by time and trial. He seems to have been personally attached to Ojeda, as

veterans, who have outlived the rash impulse of youthful valor, are apt to love the fiery quality in their younger associates. So long as he accompanied Ojeda in his enterprises, he stood by him as a Mentor in council, and a devoted partisan in danger.

In the present instance, the interference of this veteran of the seas had the most salutary effect; he prevented the impending duel of the rival governors, and persuaded them to agree that the river Darien should be the boundary-line between their respective jurisdictions.

The dispute relative to Jamaica was settled by the Admiral Don Diego Columbus himself. He had already felt aggrieved by the distribution of these governments by the King without his consent or even knowledge, being contrary to the privileges inherited from his father, the discoverer. It was in vain to contend, however, when the matter was beyond his reach, and involved in technical disputes. But as to the island of Jamaica, it in a manner lay at his own door, and he could not brook its being made a matter of gift to these brawling governors. Without waiting the slow and uncertain course of making remonstrances to the King he took the affair, as a matter of plain right, into his own hands, and ordered a brave officer, Juan de Esquibel, the same who had subjugated the

province of Higuey, to take possession of that island with seventy men, and to hold it subject to his command.

Ojeda did not hear of this arrangement until he was on the point of embarking to make sail. In the heat of the moment he loudly defied the power of the Admiral, and swore that if he ever found Juan de Esquibel on the island of Jamaica he would strike off his head. The populace present heard this menace, and had too thorough an idea of the fiery and daring character of Ojeda to doubt that he would carry it into effect. Notwithstanding his bravado, however, Juan de Esquibel proceeded according to his orders to take possession of the island of Jamaica.

The squadron of Nicuesa lingered for some time after the sailing of his rival. His courteous and engaging manners, aided by the rumor of great riches in the province of Veragua, where he intended to found his colony, had drawn numerous volunteers to his standard, insomuch that he had to purchase another ship to convey them.

Nicuesa was more of the courtier and the cavalier than the man of business, and had no skill in managing his pecuniary affairs. He had expended his funds with a lavish hand, and involved himself in debts which he had not the immediate means of paying. Many of his cred-

itors knew that his expedition was regarded with an evil eye by the Admiral, Don Diego Columbus; to gain favor with the latter, therefore, they threw all kinds of impediments in the way of Nicuesa. Never was an unfortunate gentleman more harassed and distracted by duns and demands, one plucking at his skirts as soon as another was satisfied. He succeeded however in getting all his forces embarked. He had seven hundred men, well chosen and armed, together with six horses. He chose Lope de Olano to be his captain-general, a seemingly impolitic appointment, as this Olano had been concerned with the notorious Roldan in his rebellion against Columbus.

The squadron sailed out of the harbor and put to sea, excepting one ship, with anchor atrip and sails unfurled, waited to receive Nicuesa, who was detained on shore until the last moment by the perplexities artfully multiplied around him.

Just as he was on the point of stepping into his boat he was arrested by the harpies of the law, and carried before the alcalde mayor, to answer a demand for five hundred ducats, which he was ordered to pay on the spot or prepare to go to prison.

This was a thunder-stroke to the unfortunate cavalier. In vain he represented his utter in-

capacity to furnish such a sum at the moment, in vain he represented the ruin that would accrue to himself and the vast injury to the public service should he be prevented from joining his expedition. The alcalde mayor was inflexible, and Nicuesa was reduced to despair. At this critical moment relief came from a most unexpected quarter. The heart of a notary public was melted by his distress! He stepped forward in court, and declared that rather than see so gallant a gentleman reduced to extremity he would pay down the money. Nicuesa gazed at him with astonishment and could scarce believe his senses; but when he saw him actually pay off the debt, and found himself suddenly released from this dreadful embarrassment, he embraced his deliverer with tears of gratitude, and hastened with all speed to embark, lest some other legal spell should be laid upon his person.

Chapter VIII.

EXPLOITS AND DISASTERS OF OJEDA ON THE COAST OF CARTHAGENA—FATE OF THE VETERAN JUAN DE LA COSA.

[1509.]

It was on the 10th of November, 1509, that Alonso de Ojeda set sail from San Domingo with two ships, two brigantines, and three

hundred men. He took with him also twelve brood mares. Among the remarkable adventurers who embarked with him was Francisco Pizarro, afterwards renowned as the conqueror of Peru.* Hernando Cortez had likewise intended to sail in the expedition, but was prevented by an inflammation in one of his knees.

The voyage was speedy and prosperous, and they arrived late in the autumn in the harbor of Carthagena. The veteran Juan de la Cosa was well acquainted with this place, having sailed

* Francisco Pizarro was a native of Truxillo in Estremadura. He was the illegitimate fruit of an amour between Gonsalvo Pizarro, a veteran captain of infantry, and a damsel in low life. His childhood was passed in grovelling occupations incident to the humble condition of his mother, and he is said to have been a swineherd. When he had sufficiently increased in years and stature, he enlisted as a soldier. His first campaigns may have been against the Moors in the war of Granada. He certainly served in Italy under the banner of the Great Captain, Gonsalvo of Cordova. His roving spirit then induced him to join the bands of adventurers to the New World. He was of ferocious courage, and, when engaged in any enterprise, possessed an obstinate perseverance neither to be deterred by danger, weakened by fatigue and hardship, nor checked by repeated disappointment. After having conquered the great kingdom of Peru, he was assassinated, at an advanced age, in 1541, defending himself bravely to the last.

as pilot with Rodrigo de Bastides, at the time he discovered it in 1501. He warned Alonso de Ojeda to be upon his guard, as the natives were a brave and warlike race of Carib origin, far different from the soft and gentle inhabitants of the islands. They wielded great swords of palm-wood, defended themselves with osier targets, and dipped their arrows in a subtle poison. The women, as well as the men, mingled in battle, being expert in drawing the bow and throwing a species of lance called the *azagay*. The warning was well timed, for the Indians of these parts had been irritated by the misconduct of previous adventurers, and flew to arms on the first appearance of the ships.

Juan de la Cosa now feared for the safety of the enterprise in which he had person, fortune, and official dignity at stake. He earnestly advised Ojeda to abandon this dangerous neighborhood, and to commence a settlement in the gulf of Uraba, where the people were less ferocious, and did not use poisoned weapons. Ojeda was too proud of spirit to alter his plans through fear of a naked foe. It is thought too that he had no objection to a skirmish, being desirous of a pretext to make slaves, to be sent to Hispaniola in discharge of the debts he had left unpaid.* He landed therefore with a

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 57, MS.

considerable part of his force, and a number of friars who had been sent out to convert the Indians. His faithful lieutenant, being unable to keep him out of danger, stood by to second him.

Ojeda advanced towards the savages, and ordered the friars to read aloud a certain formula, recently digested by profound jurists and divines in Spain. It began in stately form. "I, Alonso de Ojeda, servant of the most high and mighty sovereigns of Castile and Leon, conquerors of barbarous nations, their messenger and captain, do notify unto you and make you know, in the best way I can, that God our Lord, one and eternal, created the heaven and the earth, and one man and one woman, from whom you and we and all the people of the earth proceeded and are descendants, as well as all those who shall come hereafter." The formula then went on to declare the fundamental principles of the Catholic Faith; the supreme power given to St. Peter over the world and all the human race, and exercised by his representative the Pope; the donation made by a late Pope of all this part of the world and all its inhabitants to the Catholic sovereigns of Castile; and the ready obedience already paid by many of its lands, and islands, and people, to the agents and representatives of those sov-

ereigns. It called upon those savages present therefore to do the same; to acknowledge the truth of the Christian doctrines, the supremacy of the Pope, and the sovereignty of the Catholic King; but in case of refusal, denounced upon them all the horrors of war, the desolation of their dwellings, the seizure of their property, and the slavery of their wives and children. Such was the extraordinary document, which, from this time forward, was read by the Spanish discoverers to the wondering savages of any newly found country, as a prelude to sanctify the violence about to be inflicted on them.*

When the friars had read this pious manifesto, Ojeda made signs of amity to the natives, and held up glittering presents. They had already suffered, however, from the cruelties of white men, and were not to be won by kindness. On the contrary, they brandished their weapons, sounded their conches, and prepared to make battle.

Juan de la Cosa saw the rising choler of Ojeda, and knew his fiery impatience. He again entreated him to abandon these hostile shores, and reminded him of the venomous weapons of the enemy. It was all in vain. Ojeda confided blindly in the protection of the

* The reader will find the complete form of this curious manifesto in the Appendix.

Virgin. Putting up, as usual, a short prayer to his patroness, he drew his weapon, braced his buckler, and charged furiously upon the savages. Juan de la Cosa followed as heartily as if the battle had been of his own seeking. The Indians were soon routed, and a number killed, and several taken prisoners; on their persons were found plates of gold, but of an inferior quality. Flushed by this triumph, Ojeda took several of the prisoners as guides, and pursued the flying enemy four leagues into the interior. He was followed, as usual, by his faithful lieutenant, the veteran La Cosa, continually remonstrating against this useless temerity, but hardily seconding him in the most harebrained perils. Having penetrated far into the forest, they came to a stronghold of the enemy, where a numerous force was ready to receive them, armed with clubs, lances, arrows, and bucklers. Ojeda led his men to the charge with the old Castilian war-cry, "Santiago!" The savages soon took to flight. Eight of their bravest warriors threw themselves into a cabin, and plied their bows and arrows so vigorously, that the Spaniards were kept at bay. Ojeda cried shame upon his followers to be daunted by eight naked men. Stung by this reproach, an old Castilian soldier rushed through a shower of arrows and forced the

door of the cabin, but received a shaft through the heart, and fell dead on the threshold. Ojeda, furious at the sight, ordered fire to be set to the combustible edifice; in a moment it was in a blaze, and the eight warriors perished in the flames.

Seventy Indians were made captive and sent to the ships, and Ojeda, regardless of the remonstrances of Juan de la Cosa, continued his rash pursuit of the fugitives through the forest. In the dusk of the evening they arrived at a village called Yurbaco; the inhabitants of which fled to the mountains with their wives and children, and principal effects. The Spaniards, imagining that the Indians were completely terrified and dispersed, now roved in quest of booty among the deserted houses, which stood distant from each other buried among the trees. While they were thus scattered, troops of savages rushed forth, with furious yells, from all parts of the forest. The Spaniards endeavored to gather together and support each other, but every little party was surrounded by a host of foes. They fought with desperate bravery, but for once their valor and their iron armor were of no avail; they were overwhelmed by numbers, and sank beneath war-clubs and poisoned arrows.

Ojeda on the first alarm collected a few sol-

diers, and ensconced himself within a small enclosure, surrounded by palisades. Here he was closely besieged, and galled by flights of arrows. He threw himself on his knees, covered himself with his buckler, and, being small and active, managed to protect himself from the deadly shower; but all his companions were slain by his side, some of them perishing in frightful agonies. At this fearful moment the veteran La Cosa, having heard of the peril of his commander, arrived with a few followers to his assistance. Stationing himself at the gate of the palisades, the brave Biscayan kept the savages at bay until most of his men were slain, and he himself was severely wounded. Just then Ojeda sprang forth like a tiger into the midst of the enemy, dealing his blows on every side. La Cosa would have seconded him, but was crippled by his wounds. He took refuge with the remnant of his men in an Indian cabin; the straw roof of which he aided them to throw off, lest the enemy should set it on fire. Here he defended himself until all his comrades, but one, were destroyed. The subtle power of his wounds at length overpowered him, and he sank to the ground. Feeling death at hand, he called to his only surviving companion: "Brother," said he, "since God hath protected thee from harm,

sally forth and fly, and if ever thou shouldst see Alonso de Ojeda, tell him of my fate!"

Thus fell the hardy Juan de la Cosa, faithful and devoted to the very last; nor can we refrain from pausing to pay a passing tribute to his memory. He was acknowledged by his contemporaries to be one of the ablest of those gallant Spanish navigators who first explored the way to the New World. But it is by the honest and kindly qualities of his heart that his memory is most endeared to us; it is, above all, by that loyalty in friendship, displayed in this his last and fatal expedition. Warmed by his attachment for a more youthful and hot-headed adventurer, we see this wary veteran of the seas forgetting his usual prudence, and the lessons of his experience, and embarking heart and hand, purse and person, in the wild enterprises of his favorite. We behold him watching over him as a parent, remonstrating with him as a counsellor, but fighting by him as a partisan; following him, without hesitation, into known and needless danger, to certain death itself, and showing no other solicitude in his dying moments, but to be remembered by his friend.

The history of these Spanish discoverers abounds in noble and generous traits of character; but few have charmed us more than this instance of loyalty to the last gasp, in the death

of the stanch Juan de la Cosa. The Spaniard who escaped to tell the story of his end, was the only survivor of seventy that had followed Ojeda in this rash and headstrong inroad.

Chapter IV.

ARRIVAL OF NICUESA—VENGEANCE TAKEN ON THE INDIANS.

WHILE these disastrous occurrences happened on shore, great alarm began to be felt on board the ships. Days had elapsed since the party had adventured so rashly into the wilderness ; yet nothing had been seen or heard from them, and the forest spread a mystery over their fate. Some of the Spaniards ventured a little distance into the woods, but were deterred by the distant shouts and yells of the savages, and the noise of their conches and drums. Armed detachments then coasted the shore in boats, landing occasionally, climbing rocks and promontories, firing signal guns, and sounding trumpets. It was all in vain ; they heard nothing but the echoes of their own noises, or perhaps the wild whoop of an Indian from the bosom of the forest. At length, when they were about to give up the search in despair, they came to a great thicket of mangrove trees on the margin of the sea. These trees grow within the water, but

their roots rise, and are intertwined above the surface. In this entangled and almost impervious grove, they caught a glimpse of a man in Spanish attire. They entered, and, to their astonishment, found it to be Alonso de Ojeda. He was lying on the matted roots of the mangroves, his buckler on his shoulder, and his sword in his hand; but so wasted with hunger and fatigue that he could not speak. They bore him to the firm land; made a fire on the shore to warm him, for he was chilled with the damp and cold of his hiding-place, and when he was a little revived they gave him food and wine. In this way he gradually recovered strength to tell his doleful story.*

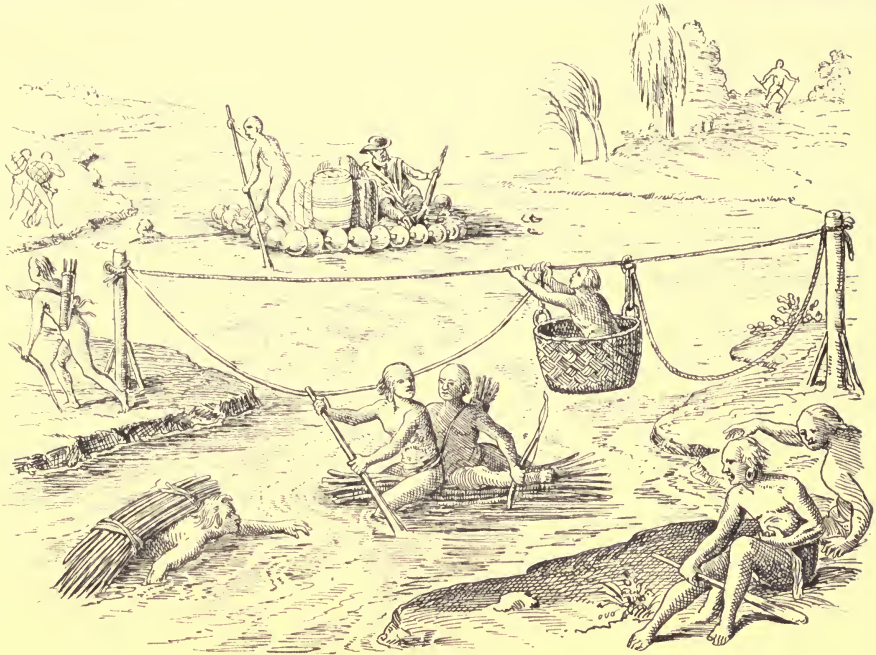
He had succeeded in cutting his way through the host of savages, and attaining the woody

* The picture here given is so much like romance, that the author quotes his authority at length: "Llegaron adonde havia, junto al agua de la marunos Manglares, que son arboles, que siempre nacen, i crecen i permanecen dientro del agua de la mar, con grandes raices, asidas, i enmarañadas unas con otras, i alli metido, i escondido hallaron à Alonso de Ojeda, con su espada en la mano, i la rodela en las espaldas, i en alla sobre trecientas, senales de flechazos. Estabo descaido de hambre, que no podia hechar de si la habla; i si no fuera tan robusto, aunque chico de cuerpo, fuera muerto."

Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 58, MS. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, d. i., lib. vii., cap. 15.

Methods of Crossing a Stream

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"



skirts of the mountains; but when he found himself alone, and that all his brave men had been cut off, he was ready to yield up in despair. Bitterly did he reproach himself for having disregarded the advice of the veteran La Cosa, and deeply did he deplore the loss of that loyal follower, who had fallen a victim to his devotion. He scarce knew which way to bend his course, but continued on, in the darkness of the night and of the forest, until out of hearing of the yells of triumph uttered by the savages over the bodies of his men. When the day broke, he sought the rudest parts of the mountains, and hid himself until the night; then struggling forward among the rocks, and precipices, and matted forests, he made his way to the seaside, but was too much exhausted to reach the ships. Indeed, it was wonderful that one so small of frame should have been able to endure such great hardships; but he was of admirable strength and hardihood. His followers considered his escape from death as little less than miraculous, and he himself regarded it as another proof of the special protection of the Virgin; for, though he had, as usual, received no wound, yet it is said his buckler bore the dints of upwards of three hundred arrows.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 58, MS. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. vii., cap. 15.

While the Spaniards were yet on shore, administering to the recovery of their commander, they beheld a squadron of ships standing towards the harbor of Carthagena, and so on perceived them to be the ships of Nicuesa. Ojeda was troubled in mind at the sight, recollecting his late intemperate defiance of that cavalier; and reflecting that should he seek him in enmity, he was in no situation to maintain his challenge, or defend himself. He ordered his men therefore to return on board the ships, and leave him alone on the shore, and not to reveal the place of his retreat while Nicuesa should remain in the harbor.

As the squadron entered the harbor, the boats sallied forth to meet it. The first inquiry of Nicuesa was concerning Ojeda. The followers of the latter replied, mournfully, that their commander had gone on a warlike expedition into the country, but days had elapsed without his return, so they feared some misfortune had befallen him. They entreated Nicuesa therefore to give his word, as a cavalier, that should Ojeda really be in distress, he would not take advantage of his misfortunes to revenge himself for their late disputes.

Nicuesa, who was a gentleman of noble and generous spirit, blushed with indignation at such a request. "Seek your commander instantly,"

said he; "bring him to me if he be alive; and I pledge myself not merely to forget the past, but to aid him as if he were a brother." *

When they met, Nicuesa received his late foe with open arms. "It is not," said he, "for *hidalgos*, like men of vulgar souls, to remember past differences when they behold one another in distress. Henceforth let all that has occurred between us be forgotten. Command me as a brother. Myself and my men are at your orders, to follow you wherever you please, until the deaths of Juan de la Cosa and his comrades are revenged."

The spirits of Ojeda were once more lifted up by this gallant and generous offer. The two governors, no longer rivals, landed four hundred of their men, and several horses, and set off with all speed for the fatal village. They approached it in the night, and, dividing their forces into two parties, gave orders that not an Indian should be taken alive.

The village was buried in deep sleep, but the woods were filled with large parrots, which, being awakened, made a prodigious clamor. The Indians, however, thinking the Spaniards all destroyed, paid no attention to these noises. It was not until their houses were assailed and wrapped in flames that they took the alarm.

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

They rushed forth, some with arms, some weaponless, but were received at their doors by the exasperated Spaniards, and either slain on the spot or driven back into the fire. Women fled wildly forth with their children in their arms, but at sight of the Spaniards' glittering steel, and of the horses, which they supposed ravenous monsters, ran back, shrieking with horror, into their burning habitations. Great was the carnage, for no quarter was shown to age or sex. Many perished by the fire, and many by the sword.

When they had fully glutted their vengeance, the Spaniards ranged about for booty. While thus employed, they found the body of the unfortunate Juan de la Cosa. It was tied to a tree, but swollen and discolored in a hideous manner by the poison of the arrows with which he had been slain. This dismal spectacle had such an effect upon the common men, that not one would remain in that place during the night. Having sacked the village, therefore, they left it a smoking ruin, and returned in triumph to the ships. The spoil in gold and other articles of value must have been great, for the share of Nicuesa and his men amounted to the value of seven thousand *castillanos*.* The two governors, now faithful confederates, parted with

* Equivalent to 37,281 dollars of the present day.

many expressions of friendship, and with mutual admiration of each other's prowess; and Nicuesa continued his voyage for the coast of Veragua.

Chapter V.

OJEDA FOUNDS THE COLONY OF SAN SEBASTIAN—BELEAGURED BY THE INDIANS.

OJEDA now adopted, though tardily, the advice of his unfortunate lieutenant, Juan de la Cosa, and, giving up all thoughts of colonizing this disastrous part of the coast, steered his course for the gulf of Uraba. He sought for a time the river Darien, famed among the Indians as abounding in gold; but not finding it, landed in various places, seeking a favorable sight for his intended colony. His people were disheartened by the disasters they had already undergone, and the appearance of surrounding objects was not calculated to reassure them. The country, though fertile, and covered with rich and beautiful vegetation, was in their eyes a land of cannibals and monsters. They began to dread the strength as well as fierceness of the savages, who could transfix a man with their arrows even when covered with armor, and whose shafts were tipped with

deadly poison. They heard the howling of tigers, panthers, and, as they thought, lions in the forests, and encountered large and venomous serpents among the rocks and thickets. As they were passing along the banks of a river, one of their horses was seized by the leg by an enormous alligator and dragged beneath the waves.*

At length Ojeda fixed upon a place for his town, on a height at the east end of the gulf. Here, landing all that could be spared from the ships, he began with all diligence to erect houses, giving this embryo capital of his province the name of San Sebastian, in honor of that sainted martyr, who was slain by arrows; hoping he might protect the inhabitants from the impoisoned shafts of the savages. As a further protection, he erected a large wooden fortress, and surrounded the place with a stockade. Feeling, however, the inadequacy of his handful of men to contend with the hostile tribes around him, he despatched a ship to Hispaniola, with a letter to the Bachelor Martin Fernandez de Enciso, his alcalde mayor, informing him of his having established his seat of government, and urging him to lose no time in joining him with all the recruits, arms, and provisions he could command. By the

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. vii., cap. 16.

same ship he transmitted to San Domingo all the captives and gold he had collected.

His capital being placed in a posture of defence, Ojeda now thought of making a progress through his wild territory; and set out, accordingly, with an armed band, to pay a friendly visit to a neighboring cacique, reputed as possessing great treasures of gold. The natives, however, had by this time learned the nature of these friendly visits, and were prepared to resist them. Scarcely had the Spaniards entered into the defiles of the surrounding forest, when they were assailed by flights of arrows from the close coverts of the thickets. Some were shot dead on the spot, others, less fortunate, expired raving with the torments of the poison; the survivors, filled with horror at the sight, and losing all presence of mind, retreated in confusion to the fortress.

It was some time before Ojeda could again persuade his men to take the field, so great was their dread of the poisoned weapons of the Indians. At length their provisions began to fail, and they were compelled to forage among the villages in search, not of gold, but of food.

In one of their expeditions they were surprised by an ambuscade of savages, in a gorge of the mountains, and attacked with such fury and effect that they were completely routed,

and pursued with yells and howlings to the very gates of San Sebastian. Many died, in excruciating agony, of their wounds, and others recovered with extreme difficulty. Those who were well, no longer dared to venture forth in search of food; for the whole forest teemed with lurking foes. They devoured such herbs and roots as they could find, without regard to their quality. The humors of their bodies became corrupted, and various diseases, combined with the ravages of famine, daily thinned their numbers. The sentinel who feebly mounted guard at night, was often found dead at his post in the morning. Some stretched themselves on the ground, and expired of mere famine and debility; nor was death any longer regarded as an evil, but rather as a welcome relief from a life of horror and despair.

Chapter VII.

ALONSO DE OJEDA SUPPOSED BY THE SAVAGES TO HAVE A CHARMED LIFE—THEIR EXPERIMENT TO TRY THE FACT.

In the meantime the Indians continued to harass the garrison, lying in wait to surprise the foraging parties, cutting off all stragglers, and sometimes approaching the walls in open

defiance. On such occasions Ojeda sallied forth at the head of his men and from his great agility was the first to overtake the retreating foe. He slew more of their warriors with his single arm than all his followers together. Though often exposed to showers of arrows, none had ever wounded him, and the Indians began to think he had a charmed life. Perhaps they had heard from fugitive prisoners the idea entertained by himself and his followers of his being under supernatural protection. Determined to ascertain the fact, they placed four of the most dexterous archers in ambush with orders to single him out. A number of them advanced towards the fort sounding their conches and drums, and uttering yells of defiance. As they expected, the impetuous Ojeda sallied forth immediately at the head of his men. The Indians fled towards the ambuscade, drawing him in heedless pursuit. The archers waited until he was full in front, and then launched their deadly shafts. Three struck his buckler and glanced harmlessly off, but the fourth pierced his thigh. Satisfied that he was wounded beyond the possibility of cure, the savages retreated with shouts of triumph. Ojeda was borne back to the fortress in great anguish of body and despondency of spirit. For the first time in his life he had lost blood

in battle. The charm in which he had hitherto confided was broken, or rather the Holy Virgin appeared to have withdrawn her protection. He had the horrible death of his followers before his eyes, who had perished of their wounds in raving frenzy.

One of the symptoms of the poison was to shoot a thrilling chill through the wounded part; from this circumstance perhaps a remedy suggested itself to the imagination of Ojeda, which few but himself could have the courage to undergo. He caused two plates of iron to be made red-hot, and ordered a surgeon to apply them to each orifice of the wound. The surgeon shuddered and refused, saying he would not be the murderer of his general.* Upon this Ojeda made a solemn vow that he would hang him unless he obeyed. To avoid the gallows, the surgeon applied the glowing plates. Ojeda refused to be tied down, or that any one should hold him during this frightful operation. He endured it without shrinking or uttering a murmur, although it so inflamed his whole system, that they had to wrap him in sheets steeped in vinegar to allay the burning heat which raged throughout his body, and we are assured that a barrel of vinegar was exhausted for the purpose. The des-

* Charlevoix, *ubi sup.*, p. 293.

perate remedy succeeded; the cold poison, says Bishop Las Casas, was consumed by the vivid fire.* How far the venerable historian is correct in his postulate surgeons may decide; but many incredulous persons will be apt to account for the cure by surmising that the arrow was not envenomed.

Chapter VIII.

ARRIVAL OF A STRANGE SHIP AT SAN SEBASTIAN.

ALONSO DE OJEDA, though pronounced out of danger, was still disabled by his wound, and his helpless situation completed the despair of his companions; for while he was in health and vigor, his buoyant and mercurial spirit, his active, restless, and enterprising habits, imparted animation, if not confidence to every one around him. The only hope of relief was from the sea, and that was nearly extinct when one day, to the unspeakable joy of the Spaniards, a sail appeared on the horizon. It made for the port and dropped anchor at the foot of the height of San Sebastian, and there was no longer a doubt that it was the promised succor from San Domingo.

*Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 59, MS.

The ship came indeed from the island of Hispaniola, but it had not been fitted out by Bachelor Enciso. The commander's name was Bernardo de Talavera. This man was one of the loose, heedless adventurers who abounded in San Domingo. His carelessness and extravagance had involved him in debt, and he was threatened with a prison. In the height of his difficulties the ship arrived which Ojeda had sent to San Domingo, freighted with slaves and gold, an earnest of the riches to be found at San Sebastian. Bernardo de Talavera immediately conceived the project of giving his creditors the slip, and escaping to this new settlement. He understood that Ojeda was in need of recruits, and felt assured that from his own reckless conduct in money matters he would sympathize with any one harassed by debt. He drew into his schemes a number of desperate debtors like himself, nor was he scrupulous about filling up his ranks with recruits whose legal embarrassments arose from more criminal causes. Never did a more vagabond crew engage in a project of colonization.

How to provide themselves with a vessel was now the question. They had neither money nor credit; but they had cunning and courage, and were troubled by no scruples of conscience. Thus qualified, a knave will often succeed bet-

ter for a time than an honest man; it is in the long run that he fails, as will be illustrated in the case of Talavera and his hopeless associates. While casting about for means to escape to San Sebastian, they heard of a vessel belonging to certain Genoese, which was at Cape Tiburon, at the western extremity of the island, taking in a cargo of bacon and cassava bread for San Domingo. Nothing could have happened more opportunely; here was a ship amply stored with provisions, and ready to their hand; they had nothing to do but to seize it and embark.

The gang, seventy in number, accordingly made their way separately and secretly to Cape Tiburon, where assembling at an appointed time and place, they boarded the vessel, overpowered the crew, weighed anchor, and set sail. They were heedless, haphazard mariners, and knew little of the management of a vessel; the historian Charlevoix thinks therefore that it was a special providence which guided them to San Sebastian. Whether or not the good father is right in his opinion, it is certain that the arrival of the ship rescued the garrison from the very brink of destruction.*

Talavera and his gang, though they had come lightly by their prize, were not disposed to part with it as frankly, but demanded to be

* *Hist. S. Domingo*, lib. iv.

paid down in gold for the provisions furnished to the starving colonists. Ojeda agreed to their terms, and taking the supplies into his possession, dealt them out sparingly to his companions. Several of his hungry followers were dissatisfied with their portions, and even accused Ojeda of unfairness in reserving an undue share for himself. Perhaps there may have been some ground for this charge, arising, not from any selfishness in the character of Ojeda, but from one of those superstitious fancies with which his mind was tinged ; for we are told that for many years he had been haunted by a presentiment that he should eventually die of hunger.*

This lurking horror of the mind may have made him depart from his usual free and lavish spirit in doling out these providential supplies, and may have induced him to set by an extra portion for himself, as a precaution against his anticipated fate ; certain it is, that great clamors rose among his people, some of whom threatened to return in the pirate vessel to Hispaniola. He succeeded however in pacifying them for the present, by representing the necessity of husbanding their supplies, and by assuring them that the Bachelor Enciso could not fail soon to arrive, when there would be provisions in abundance.

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. viii., cap. 3.

Chapter VIII.

FACTIONS IN THE COLONY—A CONVENTION MADE.

DAYS and days elapsed, but no relief arrived at San Sebastian. The Spaniards kept a ceaseless watch upon the sea, but the promised ship failed to appear. With all the husbandry of Ojeda the stock of provisions was nearly consumed; famine again prevailed, and several of the garrison perished through their various sufferings and their lack of sufficient nourishment. The survivors now became factious in their misery, and a plot was formed among them to seize upon one of the vessels in the harbor and make sail for Hispaniola.

Ojeda discovered their intentions, and was reduced to great perplexity. He saw that to remain here without relief from abroad was certain destruction, yet he clung to his desperate enterprise. It was his only chance for fortune or command; for should this settlement be broken up, he might try in vain, with his exhausted means and broken credit, to obtain another post or set on foot another expedition. Ruin in fact would overwhelm him should he return without success.

He exerted himself therefore to the utmost to pacify his men; representing the folly of abandoning a place where they had established

a foothold, and where they only needed a reinforcement to enable them to control the surrounding country, and to make themselves masters of its riches. Finding they still demurred, he offered, now that he was sufficiently recovered from his wound, to go himself to San Domingo in quest of reinforcements and supplies.

This offer had the desired effect. Such confidence had the people in the energy, ability, and influence of Ojeda, that they felt assured of relief should he seek it in person. They made a kind of convention with him therefore in which it was agreed that they should remain quietly at San Sebastian for the space of fifty days. At the end of this time, in case no tidings had been received of Ojeda, they were at liberty to abandon the settlement and return in the brigantines to Hispaniola. In the meantime Francisco Pizarro was to command the colony as lieutenant of Ojeda, until the arrival of his alcalde mayor, the Bachelor Enciso. This convention being made, Ojeda embarked in the ship of Bernardo de Talavera. That cutpurse of the ocean and his loose-handed crew were effectually cured of their ambition to colonize. Disappointed in the hope of finding abundant wealth at San Sebastian, and dismayed at the perils and horrors of the surrounding wilder-

ness, they preferred returning to Hispaniola, even at the risk of chains and dungeons. Doubtless they thought that the influence of Ojeda would be sufficient to obtain their pardon, especially as their timely succor had been the salvation of the colony.

Chapter IX.

DISASTROUS VOYAGE OF OJEDA IN THE PIRATE SHIP.

OJEDA had scarce put to sea in the ship of these freebooters, when a quarrel arose between him and Talavera. Accustomed to take the lead among his companions, still feeling himself governor, and naturally of a domineering spirit, Ojeda, on coming on board, had assumed the command as a matter of course. Talavera who claimed dominion over the ship, by the right no doubt of trover and conversion, or, in other words, of downright piracy, resisted this usurpation.

Ojeda as usual would speedily have settled the question by the sword, but he had the whole vagabond crew against him, who overpowered him with numbers and threw him in irons. Still his swelling spirit was unsubdued. He reviled Talavera and his gang as recreants, traitors, pirates, and offered to fight the whole

of them successively, provided they would give him a clear deck and come on two at a time. Notwithstanding his diminutive size, they had too high an idea of his prowess and had heard too much of his exploits to accept his challenge, so they kept him raging in his chains, while they pursued their voyage.

They had not proceeded far, however, when a violent storm arose. Talavera and his crew knew little of navigation, and were totally ignorant of those seas. The raging of the elements, the baffling winds and currents, and the danger of unknown rocks and shoals, filled them with confusion and alarm. They knew not whither they were driving before the storm or where to seek for shelter. In this hour of peril they called to mind that Ojeda was a sailor as well as a soldier, and that he had repeatedly navigated these seas. Making a truce therefore for the common safety, they took off his irons, on condition that he would pilot the vessel during the remainder of the voyage.

Ojeda acquitted himself with his accustomed spirit and intrepidity; but the vessel had already been swept so far to the westward, that all his skill was ineffectual in endeavoring to work up to Hispaniola against storms and adverse currents. Borne away by the Gulf Stream, and tempest-tost for many days, until

the shattered vessel was almost in a foundering condition, he saw no alternative but to run it ashore on the southern coast of Cuba.

Here then the crew of freebooters landed from their prize in more desperate plight than when they first took possession of it. They were on a wild and unfrequented coast, their vessel lay a wreck upon the sands, and their only chance was to travel on foot to the eastern extremity of the island, and seek some means of crossing to Hispaniola, where after all their toils, they might perhaps only arrive to be thrown into a dungeon. Such, however, is the yearning of civilized men after the haunts of cultivated society that they set out, at every risk, upon their long and painful journey.

Chapter X.

TOILSOME MARCH OF OJEDA AND HIS COMPANIONS THROUGH THE MORASSES OF CUBA.

NOTWITHSTANDING the recent services of Ojeda, the crew of Talavera still regarded him with hostility; but, if they had felt the value of his skill and courage at sea, they were no less sensible of their importance on shore, and he soon acquired that ascendency over them

which belongs to a master-spirit in time of trouble.

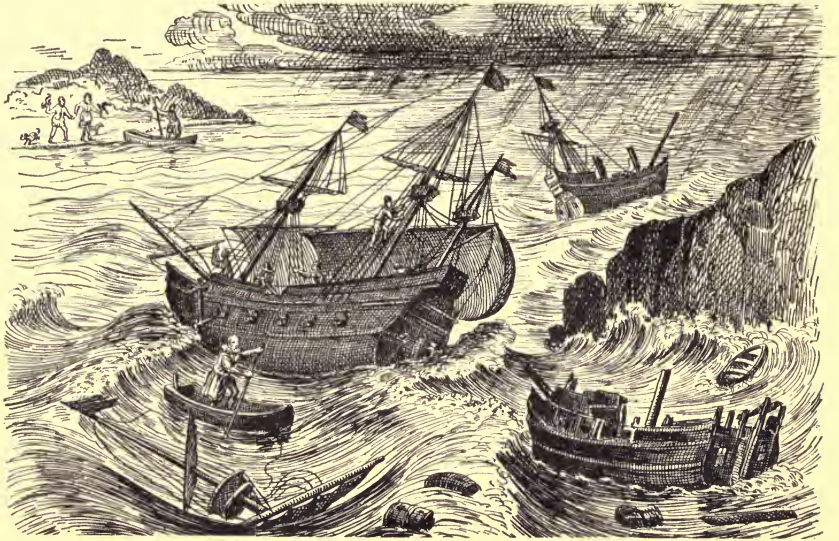
Cuba was as yet uncolonized. It was a place of refuge to the unhappy natives of Hayti, who fled hither from the whips and chains of their European taskmasters. The forests abounded with these wretched fugitives, who often opposed themselves to the shipwrecked party, supposing them to be sent by their late masters to drag them back to captivity.

Ojeda easily repulsed these attacks; but found that these fugitives had likewise inspired the villagers with hostility to all European strangers. Seeing that his companions were too feeble and disheartened to fight their way through the populous parts of the island, or to climb the rugged mountains of the interior, he avoided all towns and villages, and led them through the close forests and broad green savannas which extended between the mountains and the sea.

He had only made a choice of evils. The forests gradually retired from the coast. The savannas, where the Spaniards at first had to contend merely with long rank grass and creeping vines, soon ended in salt marshes, where the oozy bottom yielded no firm foothold, and the mud and water reached to their knees. Still they pressed forward, continually

Vessels in a Storm

Reduced fac-simile from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"



hoping in a little while to arrive at a firmer soil, and flattering themselves they beheld fresh meadow-land before them, but continually deceived. The farther they proceeded the deeper grew the mire, until, after they had been eight days on this dismal journey, they found themselves in the centre of a vast morass, where the water reached to their girdles. Though thus almost drowned they were tormented with incessant thirst, for all the water around them was as briny as the ocean. They suffered too the cravings of extreme hunger, having but a scanty supply of cassava bread and cheese, and a few potatoes and other roots, which they devoured raw. When they wished to sleep, they had to climb among the twisted roots of mangrove trees, which grew in clusters in the water. Still the dreary marsh widened and deepened. In many places they had to cross rivers and inlets, where some, who could not swim, were drowned, and others were smothered in the mire.

Their situation became wild and desperate. Their cassava bread was spoiled by the water, and their stock of roots nearly exhausted. The interminable morass still extended before them, while to return, after the distance they had come, was hopeless. Ojeda alone kept up a resolute spirit, and cheered and urged them

forward. He had the little Flemish painting of the Madonna, which had been given him by the Bishop Fonseca, carefully stored among the provisions in his knapsack. Whenever they stopped to repose among the roots of the mangrove trees, he took out this picture, placed it among the branches, and kneeling, prayed devoutly to the Virgin for protection. This he did repeatedly in the course of the day, and prevailed upon his companions to follow his example. Nay, more, at a moment of great despondency he made a solemn vow to his patroness that if she conducted him alive through this peril, he would erect a chapel in the first Indian village he should arrive at; and leave her picture there, to remain an object of adoration to the Gentiles.*

This frightful morass extended for the distance of thirty leagues, and was so deep and difficult, so entangled by roots and creeping vines, so cut up by creeks and rivers, and so beset by quagmires that they were thirty days in traversing it. Out of the number of seventy men that set out from the ship, but thirty-five remained. "Certain it is," observed the venerable Las Casas, "the sufferings of the Spaniards in the New World, in search of wealth, have been more cruel and severe than

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 60, MS.

ever nation in the world endured; but those experienced by Ojeda and his men have surpassed all others."

They were at length so overcome by hunger and fatigue that some lay down and yielded up the ghost, and others, seating themselves among the mangrove trees, waited in despair for death to put an end to their miseries. Ojeda, with a few of the lightest and most vigorous, continued to struggle forward, and to their unutterable joy, at length arrived to where the land was firm and dry. They soon descried a footpath, and following it, arrived at an Indian village, commanded by a cacique called Cueybàs. No sooner did they reach the village than they sank to the earth exhausted.

The Indians gathered round and gazed at them with wonder; but when they learnt their story, they exhibited a humanity that would have done honor to the most professing Christians. They bore them to their dwellings, set meat and drink before them, and vied with each other in discharging the offices of the kindest humanity. Finding that a number of their companions were still in the morass, the Cacique sent a large party of Indians with provisions for their relief; with orders to bring on their shoulders such as were too feeble to walk. "The Indians," says the Bishop Las

Casas, "did more than they were ordered; for so they always do, when they are not exasperated by ill treatment. The Spaniards were brought to the village, succored, cherished, consoled, and almost worshipped as if they had been angels."

Chapter VII.

OJEDA PERFORMS HIS VOW TO THE VIRGIN.

BEING recovered from his sufferings, Alonso de Ojeda prepared to perform his vow concerning the picture of the Virgin, though sorely must it have grieved him to part with a relic to which he attributed his deliverance from so many perils. He built a little hermitage or oratory in the village, and furnished it with an altar, above which he placed the picture. He then summoned the benevolent Cacique, and explained to him, as well as his limited knowledge of the language, or the aid of interpreters would permit, the main points of the Catholic faith, and especially the history of the Virgin, whom he represented as the mother of the deity that reigned in the skies, and the great advocate for mortal man.

The worthy Cacique listened to him with mute attention, and though he might not clearly com-

prehend the doctrine, yet he conceived a profound veneration for the picture. The sentiment was shared by his subjects. They kept the little oratory always swept clean, and decorated it with cotton hangings, labored by their own hands, and with various votive offerings. They composed couplets or *areytos* in honor of the Virgin, which they sang to the accompaniment of rude musical instruments, dancing to the sound under the groves which surrounded the hermitage.

A further anecdote concerning this relic may not be unacceptable. The venerable Las Casas, who records these facts, informs us that he arrived at the village of Cueybàs some time after the departure of Ojeda. He found the oratory preserved with the most religious care, as a sacred place, and the picture of the Virgin regarded with fond admiration. The poor Indians crowded to attend mass, which he performed at the altar ; they listened attentively to his paternal instructions, and at his request brought their children to be baptized. The good Las Casas having heard much of this famous relic of Ojeda, was desirous of obtaining possession of it, and offered to give the Cacique, in exchange, an image of the Virgin which he had brought with him. The chieftain made an evasive answer, and seemed much troubled in

mind. The next morning he did not make his appearance.

Las Casas went to the oratory to perform mass, but found the altar stripped of its precious relic. On inquiring, he learned that in the night the Cacique had fled to the woods, bearing off with him his beloved picture of the Virgin. It was in vain that Las Casas sent messengers after him, assuring him that he should not be deprived of the relic, but on the contrary, that the image should likewise be presented to him. The Cacique refused to venture from the fastnesses of the forest, nor did he return to his village and replace the picture in the oratory until after the departure of the Spaniards.*

Chapter XII.

ARRIVAL OF OJEDA AT JAMAICA—HIS RECEPTION BY JUAN DE ESQUIBEL.

When the Spaniards were completely restored to health and strength, they resumed their journey. The Cacique sent a large body of his subjects to carry their provisions and knapsacks, and to guide them across a desert tract

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, cap. 61, MS. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. ix., cap. 15.

of country to the province of Macaca, where Christopher Columbus had been hospitably entertained on his voyage along the coast. They experienced equal kindness from its cacique and his people, for such seems almost invariably the case with the natives of these islands, before they had held much intercourse with Europeans.

The province of Macaca was situated at Cape de la Cruz, the nearest point to the island of Jamaica. Here Ojeda learnt that there were Spaniards settled on that island, being in fact the party commanded by the very Juan de Esquibel whose head he had threatened to strike off, when departing in swelling style from San Domingo. It seemed to be the fortune of Ojeda to have his bravadoes visited on his head in times of trouble and humiliation. He found himself compelled to apply for succor to the very man he had so vaingloriously menaced. This was no time however to stand on points of pride; he procured a canoe and Indians from the cacique of Macaca, and one Pedro de Ordas undertook the perilous voyage of twenty leagues in the frail bark, and arrived safe at Jamaica.

No sooner did Esquibel receive the message of Ojeda, than, forgetting past menaces, he instantly despatched a caravel to bring to him

the unfortunate discoverer and his companions. He received him with the utmost kindness, lodged him in his own house, and treated him in all things with the most delicate attention. He was a gentleman who had seen prosperous days, but had fallen into adversity and been buffeted about the world, and had learnt now how to respect the feelings of a proud spirit in distress. Ojeda had the warm, touchy heart to feel such conduct. He remained several days with Esquibel in frank communion, and when he sailed for San Domingo, they parted the best of friends.

And here we cannot but remark the singular difference in character and conduct of these Spanish adventurers when dealing with each other, or with the unhappy natives. Nothing could be more chivalrous, urbane, and charitable; nothing more pregnant with noble sacrifices of passion and interest, with magnanimous instances of forgiveness of injuries and noble contests of generosity, than the transactions of the discoverers with each other; but the moment they turned to treat with the Indians, even with brave and high-minded caciques, they were vindictive, bloodthirsty, and implacable. The very Juan de Esquibel, who could acquit the recent hostility of Ojeda with such humanity and friendship, was the same, who,

under the government of Ovando, laid desolate the province of Higuey in Hispaniola, and inflicted atrocious cruelties upon its inhabitants.

When Alonso de Ojeda set sail for San Domingo, Bernardo de Talavera and his rabble adherents remained at Jamaica. They feared to be brought to account for their piratical exploit in stealing the Genoese vessel, and that, in consequence of their recent violence to Ojeda they would find in him an accuser rather, than an advocate. The latter, however, in the opinion of Las Casas, who knew him well, was not a man to make accusations. With all his faults he did not harbor malice. He was quick and fiery, it is true, and his sword was too apt to leap from its scabbard on the least provocation ; but after the first flash all was over, and, if he cooled upon an injury, he never sought for vengeance.

Chapter XIII.

ARRIVAL OF ALONSO DE OJEDA AT SAN DOMINGO—CONCLUSION OF HIS STORY.

On arriving at San Domingo, the first inquiry of Alonso de Ojeda was after the Bachelor Enciso. He was told that he had departed long before, with abundant supplies for the colonies,

and that nothing had been heard of him since his departure. Ojeda waited for a time in hopes of hearing, by some return ship, of the safe arrival of the Bachelor at San Sebastian. No tidings, however, arrived, and he began to fear that he had been lost in those storms which had beset himself on his return voyage.

Anxious for the relief of his settlement, and fearing that, by delay, his whole scheme of colonization would be defeated, he now endeavored to set on foot another armament, and to enlist a new set of adventurers. His efforts however were all ineffectual. The disasters of his colony were known, and his own circumstances were considered desperate. He was doomed to experience the fate that too often attends sanguine and brilliant projectors. The world is dazzled by them for a time, and hails them as heroes while successful; but misfortune dissipates the charm, and they become stigmatized with the appellation of adventurers. When Ojeda figured in San Domingo as the conqueror of Caonabo, as the commander of a squadron, as the governor of a province, his prowess and exploits were the theme of every tongue. When he set sail, in vaunting style, for his seat of government, setting the viceroy at defiance, and threatening the life of Esquibel, every one thought that fortune was

at his beck, and he was about to accomplish wonders. A few months had elapsed, and he walked the streets of San Domingo a needy man, shipwrecked in hope and fortune. His former friends, dreading some new demand upon their purses, looked coldly on him; his schemes, once so extolled, were now pronounced wild and chimerical, and he was subjected to all kinds of slights and humiliations, in the very place which had been the scene of his greatest vainglory.

While Ojeda was thus lingering at San Domingo, the Admiral Don Diego Columbus sent a party of soldiers to Jamaica to arrest Talavera and his pirate crew. They were brought in chains to San Domingo, thrown into dungeons, and tried for the robbery of the Genoese vessel. The crime was too notorious to admit of doubt, and being convicted, Talavera and several of his principal accomplices were hanged. Such was the end of their frightful journey by sea and land. Never had vagabonds travelled farther, nor toiled harder to arrive at a gallows!

In the course of the trial Ojeda had naturally been summoned as a witness, and his testimony must have tended greatly to the conviction of the culprits. This drew upon him the vengeance of the surviving comrades of Talavera, who still lurked about San Domingo. As he

was returning home one night at a late hour, he was waylaid and set upon by a number of these miscreants. He displayed his usual spirit. Setting his back against a wall, and drawing his sword, he defended himself admirably against the whole gang; nor was he content with beating them off, but pursued them for some distance through the streets: and having thus put them to utter rout, returned tranquil and unharmed to his lodgings.

This is the last achievement recorded of the gallant but reckless Ojeda; for here his bustling career terminated, and he sank into the obscurity which gathers round a ruined man. His health was broken by various hardships, and by the lurking effects of the wound received at San Sebastian, which had been but imperfectly cured. Poverty and neglect, and the corroding sickness of the heart, contributed, no less than the maladies of the body, to quench that sanguine and fiery temper, which had hitherto been the secret of his success, and to render him the mere wreck of his former self; for there is no ruin so hopeless and complete, as that of a towering spirit humiliated and broken down. He appears to have lingered some time at San Domingo. Gomara, in his history of the Indies, affirms that he turned monk, and entered the convent of San Francisco, where

he died. Such a change would not have been surprising in a man, who, in his wildest career, mingled the bigot with the soldier; nor was it unusual with military adventurers in those days, after passing their youth in the bustle and licentiousness of the camp, to end their days in the quiet and mortification of the cloister. Las Casas however, who was at San Domingo at the time, makes no mention of the fact, as he certainly would have done had it taken place. He confirms however all that has been said of the striking reverse in his character and circumstances; and he adds an affecting picture of his last moments, which may serve as a wholesome comment on his life. He died so poor that he did not leave money enough to provide for his interment; and so broken in spirit, that, with his last breath, he entreated his body might be buried in the monastery of San Francisco, just at the portal, in humble expiation of his past pride, "*that every one who entered might tread upon his grave.*" *

Such was the fate of Alonso de Ojeda,—and who does not forget his errors and his faults at the threshold of his humble and untimely grave! He was one of the most fearless and aspiring of the band of "Ocean chivalry" that followed the footsteps of Columbus. His story

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*

presents a lively picture of the daring enterprises, the extravagant exploits, the thousand accidents, by flood and field, which checkered the life of a Spanish cavalier in that roving and romantic age.

"Never," says Charlevoix, "was a man more suited for a *coup-de-main*, or to achieve and suffer great things under the direction of another; none had a heart more lofty, nor ambition more aspiring; none ever took less heed of fortune, nor showed greater firmness of soul, nor found more resources in his own courage; but none was less calculated to be commander-in-chief of a great enterprise. Good management and good fortune forever failed him."*

* Charlevoix, *Hist. San Domingo.*

THE VOYAGE OF DIEGO DE NICUESA.

Chapter I.

NICUESA SAILS TO THE WESTWARD—HIS SHIPWRECK AND SUBSEQUENT DISASTERS.

WE have now to recount the fortunes experienced by the gallant and generous Diego de Nicuesa, after his parting from Alonso de Ojeda at Carthagena. On resuming his voyage, he embarked in a caravel, that he might be able to coast the land and reconnoitre; he ordered that the two brigantines, one of which was commanded by his lieutenant Lope de Olano, should keep near him, while the large vessels, which drew more water, should stand farther out to sea. The squadron arrived upon the coast of Veragua, in stormy weather; and, as Nicuesa could not find any safe harbor, and

was apprehensive of rocks and shoals, he stood out to sea at the approach of night, supposing that Lope de Olano would follow him with the brigantines according to his orders. The night was boisterous, the caravel was much tossed and driven about, and when the morning dawned not one of the squadron was in sight.

Nicuesa feared some accident had befallen the brigantines; he stood for the land, and coasted along it in search of them until he came to a large river, into which he entered and came to anchor. He had not been here long when the stream suddenly subsided, having merely been swollen by the rains. Before he had time to extricate himself, the caravel grounded, and at length fell over on one side. The current rushing like a torrent, strained the feeble bark to such a degree that her seams yawned, and she appeared ready to go to pieces. In this moment of peril a hardy seaman threw himself into the water, to carry the end of a rope on shore as a means of saving the crew. He was swept away by the furious current, and perished in the sight of his companions. Undismayed by his fate, another brave seaman plunged into the waves and succeeded in reaching the shore. He then fastened one end of a rope firmly to a tree, and the other being secured on board of the caravel,

Nicuesa and his crew passed one by one along it, and reached the shore in safety.

Scarcely had they landed when the caravel went to pieces, and with it perished their provisions, clothing, and all other necessaries. Nothing remained to them but the boat of the caravel, which was accidently cast on shore. Here then they were, in helpless plight, on a remote and savage coast, without food, without arms, and almost naked. What had become of the rest of the squadron they knew not. Some feared that the brigantines had been wrecked; others called to mind that Lope de Olano had been one of the loose, lawless men confederated with Francisco Roldan in his rebellion against Columbus, and judging him from the school in which he had served, hinted their apprehension that he had deserted with the brigantines. Nicuesa partook of their suspicions, and was anxious and sad at heart. He concealed his uneasiness, however, and endeavored to cheer up his companions, proposing that they should proceed westward on foot in search of Veragua, the seat of his intended government; observing that if the ships had survived the tempest they would probably repair to that place. They accordingly set off along the sea-shore, for the thickness of the forest prevented their traversing the interior.

Four of the hardiest sailors put to sea in the boat, and kept abreast of them, to help them across the bays and rivers.

Their sufferings were extreme. Most of them were destitute of shoes, and many almost naked. They had to clamber over sharp and rugged rocks, and to struggle through dense forests beset with thorns and brambles. Often they had to wade across rank fens and morasses, and drowned lands, or to traverse deep and rapid streams.

Their food consisted of herbs and roots, and shell-fish gathered along the shore. Had they even met with Indians, they would have dreaded, in their unarmed state, to apply to them for provisions, lest they should take revenge for the outrages committed along this coast by other Europeans.

To render their sufferings more intolerable they were in doubt whether, in the storms which preceded their shipwreck, they had not been driven past Veragua, in which case each step would take them so much the farther from their desired haven.

Still they labored feebly forward, encouraged by the words and the example of Nicuesa, who cheerfully partook of the toils and hardships of the meanest of his men.

They had slept one night at the foot of im-

pending rocks, and were about to resume their weary march in the morning, when they were espied by some Indians from a neighboring height. Among the followers of Nicuesa was a favorite page, whose tattered finery and white hat caught the quick eyes of the savages. One of them immediately singled him out, and taking deadly aim, let fly an arrow that laid him expiring at the feet of his master. While the generous cavalier mourned over his slaughtered page, consternation prevailed among his companions, each fearing for his own life. The Indians, however, did not follow up this casual act of hostility, but suffered the Spaniards to pursue their painful journey unmolested.

Arriving one day at the point of a great bay that ran far inland, they were conveyed, a few at a time, in the boat, to what appeared to be the opposite point. Being all landed, and resuming their march, they found to their surprise that they were on an island separated from the mainland by a great arm of the sea. The sailors who managed the boat were too weary to take them to the opposite shore, they remained therefore all night upon the island.

In the morning they prepared to depart, but to their consternation the boat with the four mariners had disappeared. They ran anxiously from point to point, uttering shouts

and cries, in hopes the boat might be in some inlet; they clambered the rocks, and strained their eyes over the sea. It was all in vain. No boat was to be seen: no voice responded to their call; it was too evident the four mariners had either perished or had deserted them.

Chapter III.

NICUESA AND HIS MEN ON A DESOLATE ISLAND.

THE situation of Nicuesa and his men was dreary and desperate in the extreme. They were on a desolate island, bordering upon a swampy coast, in a remote and lonely sea, where commerce never spread a sail. Their companions in the other ships, if still alive and true to them, had doubtless given them up for lost; and many years might elapse before the casual bark of a discoverer might venture along these shores. Long before that time their fate would be sealed; and their bones, bleaching on the sands, would alone tell their story.

In this hopeless state many abandoned themselves to frantic grief, wandering about the island, wringing their hands and uttering groans and lamentations; others called upon God for succor, and many sat down in silent and sullen despair.

The cravings of hunger and thirst at length aroused them to exertion. They found no food but a few shell-fish scattered along the shore, and coarse herbs and roots, some of them of an unwholesome quality. The island had neither springs nor streams of fresh water, and they were fain to slake their thirst at the brackish pools of the marshes.

Nicuesa endeavored to animate his men with new hopes. He employed them in constructing a raft of drift-wood and branches of trees, for the purpose of crossing the arm of the sea that separated them from the mainland. It was a difficult task, for they were destitute of tools; and when the raft was finished, they had no oars with which to manage it. Some of the most expert swimmers undertook to propel it, but they were too much enfeebled by their sufferings. On their first essay the currents which sweep that coast bore the raft out to sea, and they swam back with difficulty to the island. Having no other chance of escape, and no other means of exercising and keeping up the spirits of his followers, Nicuesa repeatedly ordered new rafts to be constructed; but the result was always the same, and the men at length either grew too feeble to work, or renounced the attempt in despair.

Thus day after day and week after week

elapsed, without any mitigation of suffering or any prospect of relief. Every day some one or other sank under his miseries, a victim, not so much to hunger and thirst, as to grief and despondency. His death was envied by his wretched survivors, many of whom were reduced to such debility that they had to crawl on hands and knees in search of the herbs and shell-fish which formed their scanty food.

Chapter III.

ARRIVAL OF A BOAT—CONDUCT OF LOPE DE OLANO.

When the unfortunate Spaniards, without hope of succor, began to consider death as a desirable end to their miseries, they were roused to new life one day by beholding a sail gleaming on the horizon. Their exultation was checked however by the reflection how many chances there were against its approaching this wild and desolate island. Watching it with anxious eyes, they put up prayers to God to conduct it to their relief; and at length, to their great joy, they perceived that it was steering directly for the island. On a nearer approach it proved to be one of the brigantines which had been commanded by Lope de Olano. It came to anchor; a boat put off, and

among the crew were the four sailors who had disappeared so mysteriously from the island.

These men accounted in a satisfactory manner for their desertion. They had been persuaded that the ships were in some harbor to the eastward, and that they were daily leaving them farther behind. Disheartened at the constant, and, in their opinion, fruitless toil which fell to their share in the struggle westward, they resolved to take their own counsel, without risking the opposition of Nicuesa. In the dead of the night therefore when their companions on the island were asleep, they silently cast off their boat, and retraced their course along the coast. After several days' toil they found the brigantines under the command of Lope de Olano, in the river of Belen, the scene of the disasters of Columbus in his fourth voyage.

The conduct of Lope de Olano was regarded with suspicion by his contemporaries, and is still subject to doubt. He is supposed to have deserted Nicuesa designedly, intending to usurp the command of the expedition. Men however were prone to judge harshly of him from his having been concerned in the treason and rebellion of Francisco Roldan. On the stormy night when Nicuesa stood out to sea to avoid the dangers of the shore, Olano took shelter

under the lee of an island. Seeing nothing of the caravel of his commander in the morning, he made no effort to seek for it, but proceeded with the brigantines to the river of the Chagres, where he found the ships at anchor. They had landed all their cargo, being almost in a sinking condition from the ravages of the worms. Olano persuaded the crews that Nicuesa had perished in the late storm, and, being his lieutenant, he assumed command. Whether he had been perfidious or not in his motives his command was but a succession of disasters. He sailed from Chagres for the river of Belen, where the ships were found so damaged that they had to be broken to pieces. Most of the people constructed wretched cabins on the shore, where, during a sudden storm, they were almost washed away by the swelling of the river, or swallowed up in the shifting sands. Several of his men were drowned in an expedition in quest of gold, and he himself merely escaped by superior swimming. Their provisions were exhausted, they suffered from hunger and from various maladies, and many perished in extreme misery. All were clamorous to abandon the coast, and Olano set about constructing a caravel, out of the wreck of the ships, for the purpose, as he said, of returning to Hispaniola, though many suspected it was

still his intention to persist in the enterprise. Such was the state in which the four seamen had found Olano and his party ; most of them living in miserable cabins, and destitute of the necessaries of life.

The tidings that Nicuesa was still alive, put an end to the sway of Olano. Whether he had acted with truth or perfidy, he now manifested a zeal to relieve his commander, and immediately despatched a brigantine in quest of him, which, guided by the four seamen, arrived at the island in the way that has been mentioned.

Chapter IV.

NICUESA REJOINS HIS CREWS.

WHEN the crew of the brigantine and the companions of Nicuesa met, they embraced each other with tears, for the hearts even of the rough mariners were subdued by the sorrows they had undergone ; and men are rendered kind to each other by a community of suffering. The brigantine had brought a quantity of palm-nuts, and of such other articles of food as they had been able to procure along the coast. These the famished Spaniards devoured with such verocity that Nicuesa was obliged to interfere, lest they should injure themselves. Nor was

the supply of fresh water less grateful to their parched and fevered palates.

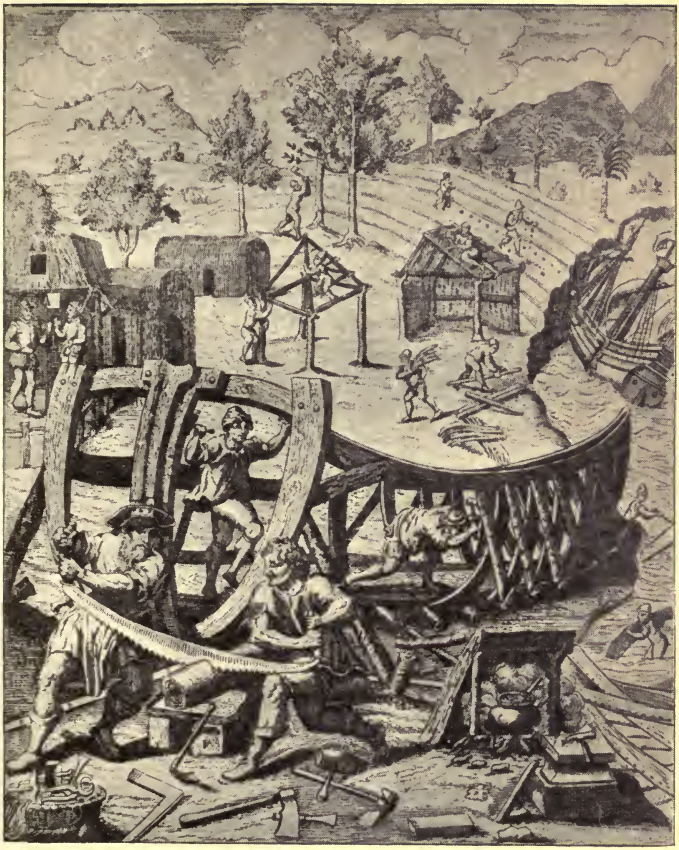
When sufficiently revived, they all abandoned the desolate island, and set sail for the river Belen, exulting as joyfully as if their troubles were at an end, and they were bound to a haven of delight, instead of merely changing the scene of suffering, and encountering a new variety of horrors.

In the meantime Lope de Olano had been diligently preparing for the approaching interview with his commander, by persuading his fellow-officers to intercede in his behalf, and to place his late conduct in the most favorable light. He had need of their intercessions. Nicuesa arrived, burning with indignation. He ordered him to be instantly seized and punished as a traitor; attributing to his desertion the ruin of the enterprise, and the sufferings and death of so many of his brave followers. The fellow-captains of Olano spoke in his favor; but Nicuesa turned indignantly upon them: "You do well," cried he, "to supplicate mercy for him; you, who, yourselves, have need of pardon! You have participated in his crime; why else, have you suffered so long a time to elapse without compelling him to send one of the vessels in search of me?"

The captains vindicated themselves by assur-

Building a Caravel

From Herrera's "History of the West Indies"



ances of their belief in his having foundered at sea. They reiterated their supplications for mercy to Olano; drawing the most affecting pictures of their past and present sufferings, and urging the impolicy of increasing the horrors of their situation by acts of severity. Nicuesa at length was prevailed upon to spare his victim; resolving to send him, by the first opportunity, a prisoner to Spain. It appeared, in truth, no time to add to the daily blows of fate that were thinning the number of his followers. Of the gallant armament of seven hundred resolute and effective men that had sailed with them from San Domingo, four hundred had already perished by various miseries; and of the survivors many could scarcely be said to live.

Chapter V.

SUFFERINGS OF NICUESA AND HIS MEN ON THE COAST OF THE ISTHMUS.

The first care of Nicuesa, on resuming the general command, was to take measures for the relief of his people, who were perishing with famine and disease. All those who were in health, or who had strength sufficient to bear the least fatigue, were sent on foraging parties, among the fields and villages of the natives.

It was a service of extreme peril; for the Indians of this part of the coast were fierce and warlike, and were the same who had proved so formidable to Columbus and his brother when they attempted to found a settlement in this neighborhood.

Many of the Spaniards were slain in these expeditions. Even if they succeeded in collecting provisions, the toil of bringing them to the harbor was worse to men in their enfeebled condition than the task of fighting for them, for they were obliged to transport them on their backs, and thus heavily laden to scramble over rugged rocks through almost impervious forests and across dismal swamps.

Harassed by these perils and fatigues, they broke forth into murmurs against their commander, accusing him, not merely of indifference to their sufferings, but of wantonly imposing severe and unnecessary tasks upon them out of revenge for their having neglected him.

The genial temper of Nicuesa had, in fact, been soured by disappointment; and a series of harassing cares and evils had rendered him irritable and impatient; but he was a cavalier of a generous and honorable nature, and does not appear to have enforced any services that were not indispensable to the common safety. In fact, the famine had increased to such a degree,

that, we are told, thirty Spaniards having on one occasion found the dead body of an Indian in a state of decay, they were driven by hunger to make a meal of it, and were so infected by the horrible repast, that not one of them survived.*

Disheartened by these miseries, Nicuesa determined to abandon a place which seemed destined to be the grave of Spaniards. Embarking the greater part of his men in the two brigantines, and the caravel which had been built by Olano, he set sail eastward in search of some more favorable situation for his settlement. A number of the men remained behind, to await the ripening of some maize and vegetables which they had sown. These he left under the command of Alonso Nuñez, whom he nominated his alcalde mayor.

When Nicuesa had coasted about four leagues to the east, a Genoese sailor, who had been with Columbus in his last voyage, informed him that there was a fine harbor somewhere in that neighborhood, which had pleased the old Admiral so highly, that he had given it the name of Puerto Bello. He added, that they might know the harbor by an anchor, half buried in the sand, which Columbus had left there ; near to which was a fountain of remark-

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i. and viii., cap. 2.

ably cool and sweet water, springing up at the foot of a large tree. Nicuesa ordered search to be made along the coast, and at length they found the anchor, the fountain, and the tree. It was the same harbor which bears the name of Porto Bello at the present day. A number of the crew were sent on shore in search of provisions, but were assailed by the Indians; and, being too weak to wield their weapons with their usual prowess, were driven back to the vessel with the loss of several slain or wounded.

Dejected at these continual misfortunes, Nicuesa continued his voyage seven leagues farther, until he came to the harbor which Columbus had given the name of Puerto de Bastimientos, or Port of Provisions. It presented an advantageous situation for a fortress, and was surrounded by a fruitful country. Nicuesa resolved to make it his abiding place. "Here," said he, "let us stop, *en el nombre de Dios!*" (in the name of God). His followers, with the superstitious feeling under which men in adversity are prone to interpret everything into omens, persuaded themselves that there was favorable augury in his words, and called the harbor "Nombre de Dios," which name it afterwards retained.

Nicuesa now landed, and drawing his sword, took solemn possession in the name of the

Catholic sovereigns. He immediately began to erect a fortress, to protect his people against the attacks of the savages. As this was a case of exigency, he exacted the labor of every one capable of exertion. The Spaniards, thus equally distressed by famine and toil, forgot their favorable omen, cursed the place as fated to be their grave, and called down imprecations on the head of their commander, who compelled them to labor when ready to sink with hunger and debility. Those murmured no less who were sent in quest of food, which was only to be gained by fatigue and bloodshed; for whatever they collected they had to transport from great distances, and they were frequently waylaid and assaulted by the Indians.

When he could spare men for the purpose, Nicuesa despatched the caravel for those whom he had left at the river Belen. Many of them had perished, and the survivors had been reduced to such famine at times, as to eat all kinds of reptiles, until a part of an alligator was a banquet to them. On mustering all his forces when thus united, Nicuesa found that but one hundred emaciated and dejected wretches remained.

He despatched the caravel to Hispaniola, to bring a quantity of bacon which he had ordered to have prepared there, but it never re-

turned. He ordered Gonzalo de Badajos, at the head of twenty men, to scour the country for provisions; but the Indians had ceased to

A MANNER OF FISHING.

cultivate: they could do with little food, and could subsist on the roots and wild fruits of the forest. The Spaniards, therefore, found

deserted villages and barren fields, but lurking enemies at every defile. So deplorably were they reduced by their sufferings, that at length there were not left a sufficient number in health and strength to mount guard at night; and the fortress remained without sentinels. Such was the desperate situation of this once gay and gallant cavalier, and of his brilliant armament, which, but a few months before, had sailed from San Domingo, flushed with the consciousness of power, and the assurance that they had the means of compelling the favors of fortune.

It is necessary to leave them for a while, and turn our attention to other events, which will ultimately be found to bear upon their destinies.

Chapter VII.

EXPEDITION OF THE BACHELOR ENCISO IN SEARCH OF THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT OF OJEDA.

[1510.]

In calling to mind the narrative of the last expedition of Alonso de Ojeda, the reader will doubtless remember the Bachelor Martin Fernandez de Enciso, who was inspired by that adventurous cavalier with an ill-starred passion for colonizing, and freighted a vessel at San

Domingo with reinforcements and supplies for the settlement at San Sebastian.

When the Bachelor was on the eve of sailing, a number of the loose hangers-on of the colony and men encumbered with debt concerted to join his ship from the coast and the outports. Their creditors, however, getting notice of their intention, kept a close watch upon every one that went on board while in the harbor, and obtained an armed vessel from the Admiral Don Diego Columbus, to escort the enterprising Bachelor clear of the island. One man, however, contrived to elude these precautions, and, as he afterwards rose to great importance, it is proper to notice him particularly. His name was Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. He was a native of Xeres de los Caballeros, and of a noble though impoverished family. He had been brought up in the service of Don Pedro Puerto Carrero, Lord of Moguer, and he afterwards enlisted among the adventurers who accompanied Rodrigo de Bastides in his voyage of discovery. Peter Martyr, in his Latin decades, speaks of him by the appellation of "*egregius digladiator*," which has been interpreted by some as a skilful swordsman, by others as an adroit fencing-master. He intimates, also, that he was a mere soldier of fortune, of loose prodigal habits; and the cir-

cumstances under which he is first introduced to us justify this character. He had fixed himself for a time in Hispaniola, and undertaken to cultivate a farm at the town of Salvatierra, on the sea-coast, but in a little time had completely involved himself in debt. The expedition of Enciso presented him with an opportunity of escaping from his embarrassments, and of indulging his adventurous habits. To elude the vigilance of his creditors and of the armed escort, he concealed himself in a cask, which was conveyed from his farm on the sea-coast on board of the vessel, as if containing provisions for the voyage. When the vessel was fairly out at sea, and abandoned by the escort, Vasco Nuñez emerged like an apparition from his cask, to the great surprise of Enciso, who had been totally ignorant of the stratagem. The Bachelor was indignant at being thus outwitted, even though he gained a recruit by the deception; and in the ebullition of his wrath, gave the fugitive debtor a very rough reception, threatening to put him on shore on the first uninhabited island they should encounter. Vasco Nuñez, however, succeeded in pacifying him, "for God," says the venerable Las Casas, "reserved him for greater things." It is probable the Bachelor beheld in him a man well fitted for his expe-

dition, for Vasco Nuñez was in the prime and vigor of his days, tall and muscular, seasoned to hardships, and of intrepid spirit.

Arriving at the mainland, they touched at the fatal harbor of Carthagena, the scene of the sanguinary conflicts of Ojeda and Nicuesa with the natives, and of the death of the brave Juan de la Cosa. Enciso was ignorant of those events, having had no tidings from those adventurers since their departure from San Domingo; without any hesitation, therefore, he landed a number of his men to repair his boat, which was damaged, and to procure water. While the men were working upon the boat, a multitude of Indians gathered at a distance, well armed and with menacing aspect, sounding their shells and brandishing their weapons. The experience they had of the tremendous powers of the strangers, however, rendered them cautious of attacking, and for three days they hovered in this manner about the Spaniards, the latter being obliged to keep continually on the alert. At length two of the Spaniards ventured one day from the main body, to fill a water-cask from the adjacent river. Scarcely had they reached the margin of the stream, when eleven savages sprang from the thickets and surrounded them, bending their bows and pointing their arrows. In this way they stood

for a moment or two in fearful suspense, the Indians refraining from discharging their shafts, but keeping them constantly pointed at their breasts. One of the Spaniards attempted to escape to his comrades who were repairing the boat, but the other called him back, and understanding something of the Indian tongue, addressed a few amicable words to the savages. The latter, astonished at being spoken to in their own language, now relaxed a little from their fierceness, and demanded of the strangers who they were, who were their leaders, and what they sought upon their shores. The Spaniard replied that they were harmless people, who came from other lands, and merely touched there through necessity, and he wondered that they should meet with such hostility; he at the same time warned them to beware, as there would come many of his countrymen well armed, and would wreck terrible vengeance upon them for any mischief they might do. While they were thus parleying, the Bachelor Enciso, hearing that two of his men were surrounded by the savages, sallied instantly from his ship, and hastened with an armed force to their rescue. As he approached, however, the Spaniard who had held the parley made him a signal that the natives were pacific. In fact the latter had supposed that this was a

new invasion of Ojeda and Nicuesa, and had thus arrayed themselves, if not to take vengeance for past outrages, at least to defend their houses from a second desolation. When they were convinced, however, that these were a totally different band of strangers, and without hostile intentions, their animosity was at an end; they threw by their weapons, and came forward with the most confiding frankness. During the whole time that the Spaniards remained there, they treated them with the greatest friendship, supplying them with bread made from maize, with salted fish, and with the fermented and spirituous beverages common along that coast. Such was the magnanimous conduct of the men who were considered among the most ferocious and warlike of these savage nations, and who, but recently, had beheld their shores invaded, their villages ravaged and burnt, and their friends and relations butchered, without regard to age or sex, by the countrymen of these very strangers. When we recall the bloody and indiscriminate vengeance wreaked upon this people by Ojeda and his followers, for their justifiable resistance of invasion, and compare it with their placable and considerate spirit when an opportunity for revenge presented itself, we confess we feel a momentary doubt whether the arbitrary appel-

lation of savage is always applied to the right party.

Chapter VII.

THE BACHELOR HEARS UNWELCOME TIDINGS OF HIS DESTINED JURISDICTION.

Not long after the arrival of Enciso at this eventful harbor, he was surprised by the circumstance of a brigantine entering and coming to anchor. To encounter a European sail in these almost unknown seas, was always a singular and striking occurrence; but the astonishment of the Bachelor was mingled with alarm when, on boarding the brigantine, he found it manned by a number of the men who had embarked with Ojeda. His first idea was, that they had mutinied against their commander, and deserted with the vessel. The feelings of the magistrate were aroused within him by the suspicion, and he determined to take his first step as alcalde mayor, by seizing them, and inflicting on them the severity of the law. He altered his tone, however, on conversing with their resolute commander. This was no other than Francisco Pizarro, whom Ojeda had left as his *locum tenens* at San Sebastian, and who showed the Bachelor his letter-patent, signed by that unfortunate governor. In fact,

the little brigantine contained the sad remnant of the once vaunted colony. After the departure of Ojeda in the pirate ship, his followers, whom he had left behind under the command of Pizarro, continued in the fortress until the stipulated term of fifty days had expired. Receiving no succor, and hearing no tidings of Ojeda, they then determined to embark and sail for Hispaniola ; but here an unthought-of difficulty presented itself: they were seventy in number, and the two brigantines which had been left with them were incapable of taking so many. They came to the forlorn agreement therefore, to remain until famine, sickness, and the poisoned arrows of the Indians should reduce their number to the capacity of the brigantines. A brief space of time was sufficient for the purpose. They then prepared for the voyage. Four mares which had been kept alive, as terrors to the Indians, were killed, and salted for sea-stores. Then taking whatever other articles of provisions remained, they embarked and made sail. One brigantine was commanded by Pizarro, the other by one Valenzuela.

They had not proceeded far when, in a storm, a sea struck the crazy vessel of Valenzuela with such violence as to cause it to founder with all its crew. The other brigantine was so

near, that the mariners witnessed the struggles of their drowning companions, and heard their cries. Some of the sailors, with the common disposition to the marvellous, declared that they beheld a great whale, or some other monster of the deep, strike the vessel with its tail, and either stave in its sides or shatter the rudder, so as to cause the shipwreck.* The surviving brigantine then made the best of its way to the harbor of Carthagena, to seek provisions.

Such was the disastrous account rendered to the Bachelor by Pizarro, of his destined jurisdiction. Enciso, however, was of a confident mind and sanguine temperament, and trusted to restore all things to order and prosperity on his arrival.

Chapter VIII.

CRUSADE OF THE BACHELOR ENCISO AGAINST THE SEPULCHRES OF ZENU.

THE Bachelor Enciso, as has been shown, was a man of the sword as well as of the robe; having doubtless imbibed a passion for military exploit from his intimacy with the discoverers. Accordingly, while at Carthagena, he was visited by an impulse of the kind, and undertook

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. vii., cap. 10.

an enterprise that would have been worthy of his friend Ojeda. He had been told by the Indians, that about twenty-five leagues to the west lay a province called Zenu, the mountains of which abounded with the finest gold. This was washed down by torrents during the rainy season, in such quantities that the natives stretched nets across the rivers to catch the largest particles, some of which were said to be as large as eggs.

The idea of taking gold in nets captivated the imagination of the Bachelor, and his cupidity was still more excited by further accounts of this wealthy province. He was told that Zenu was the general place of sepulture of the Indian tribes throughout the country, whither they brought their dead, and buried them, according to their custom, decorated with their most precious ornaments.

It appeared to him a matter of course, therefore, that there must be an immense accumulation of riches in the Indian tombs, from the golden ornaments that had been buried with the dead through a long series of generations. Fired with the thought, he determined to make a foray into this province, and to sack the sepulchres! Neither did he feel any compunctions at the idea of plundering the dead, considering the deceased as pagans and infi-

dels, who had forfeited even the sanctuary of the grave, by having been buried according to the rites and ceremonies of their idolatrous religion.

Enciso, accordingly, made sail from Carthagena, and landed with his forces on the coast of Zenu. Here he was promptly opposed by two caciques, at the head of a large band of warriors. The Bachelor, though he had thus put on the soldier, retained sufficient of the spirit of his former calling, not to enter into quarrel without taking care to have the law on his side ; he proceeded regularly, therefore, according to the legal form recently enjoined by the Crown. He caused to be read and interpreted to the caciques the same formula used by Ojeda, expounding the nature of the Deity, the supremacy of the Pope, and the right of the Catholic sovereigns, to all these lands, by virtue of a grant from his holiness. The caciques listened to the whole very attentively and without interruption, according to the laws of Indian courtesy. They then replied, that, as to the assertion that there was but one God, the sovereign of heaven and earth, it seemed to them good, and that such must be the case ; but as to the doctrine that the Pope was regent of the world in place of God, and that he had made a grant of their country to the Spanish king, they observed that the Pope must have

been drunk to give away what was not his, and the king must have been somewhat mad to ask at his hands what belonged to others. They added, that they were lords of those lands, and needed no other sovereign, and that if this king should come to take possession, they would cut off his head, and put it on a pole ; that being their mode of dealing with their enemies. As an illustration of this custom, they pointed out to Enciso the very uncomfortable spectacle of a row of grisly heads impaled in the neighborhood.

Nothing daunted either by the reply or the illustration, the Bachelor menaced them with war and slavery, as the consequences of their refusal to believe and submit. They replied by threatening to put his head upon a pole, as a representative of his sovereign. The Bachelor, having furnished them with the law, now proceeded to the commentary. He attacked the Indians, routed them, and took one of the caciques prisoner ; but in the skirmish two of his men were slightly wounded with poisoned arrows, and died raving with torment.*

* The above anecdote is related by the Bachelor Enciso himself, in a geographical work entitled *Suma de Geographia*, which he published in Seville, in 1519. As the reply of the poor savages contains something of natural logic, we give a part of it as reported by the Bachelor. "Respondieron me : que en lo que dezia que no avia sino un Dios, y que este gov-

Carrying a Cacique on a Litter

Redrawn from Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

It does not appear however that his crusade against the sepulchres was attended with any lucrative advantage. Perhaps the experience he had received of the hostility of the natives, and of the fatal effects of their poisoned arrows, prevented his penetrating into the land with his scanty force. Certain it is, the reputed wealth of Zenu and the tale of its fishery for gold with nets, remained unascertained and uncontradicted, and were the cause of subsequent and disastrous enterprises. The Bachelor contented himself with his victory, and returning to his ships prepared to continue his voyage for the seat of government established by Ojeda in the gulf of Uraba.

Chapter IX.

THE BACHELOR ARRIVES AT SAN SEBASTIAN—HIS DISASTERS THERE, AND SUBSEQUENT EXPLOITS AT DARIEN.

It was not without extreme difficulty, and the peremptory exercise of his authority as

ernaba el cielo y la tierra, y que era señor de todo, que les parecia y que asi debia ser: pero que en lo que dezia que el papa era señor de todo el universo en lugar de Dios, y que el avia fecho merced de aquella tierra al rey de Castilla; dixeron que el papa debiera estar boracho quando lo hizo, pues daba lo que no era suyo, y que el rey que pedia y tomava tal merced debia ser algum loco pues pedia lo que era de otros," etc.

alcalde mayor, that Enciso prevailed upon the crew of Pizarro to return with him to the fated shores of San Sebastian. He at length arrived in sight of the long-wished-for seat of his anticipated power and authority ; but here he was doomed like his principal, Ojeda, to meet with nothing but misfortune. On entering the harbor his vessel struck on a rock on the eastern point. The rapid currents and tumultuous waves rent it to pieces ; the crew escaped with great difficulty to the brigantine of Pizarro. A little flour, cheese, and biscuit, and a small part of the arms were saved, but the horses, mares, swine, and other colonial supplies were swept away, and the unfortunate Bachelor beheld the proceeds of several years of prosperous litigation swallowed up in an instant.

His dream of place and dignity seemed equally on the point of vanishing; for, on landing, he found the fortress and its adjacent houses mere heaps of ruins, having been destroyed with fire by the Indians.

For a few days the Spaniards maintained themselves with palm-nuts, and with the flesh of a kind of wild swine of which they met with several herds. These supplies failing, the Bachelor sallied forth with a hundred men to forage the country. They were waylaid by three Indians, who discharged all the arrows in

their quivers with incredible rapidity, wounded several Spaniards, and then fled with a swiftness that defied pursuit. The Spaniards returned to the harbor in dismay. All their dread of the lurking savages and their poisoned arrows revived, and they insisted upon abandoning a place marked out for disaster.

The Bachelor Enciso was himself disheartened at the situation of this boasted capital of San Sebastian ; but whither could he go where the same misfortunes might not attend him? In this moment of doubt and despondency, Vasco Nuñez, the same absconding debtor who had been smuggled on board in the cask, stepped forward to give counsel. He informed the Bachelor that several years previous he had sailed along that coast with Rodrigo de Bastides. They had explored the whole gulf of Uraba ; and he well remembered an Indian village situated on the western side, on the banks of a river which the natives called Darien. The country around was fertile and abundant, and was said to possess mines of gold ; and the natives, though a warlike race, never made use of poisoned weapons. He offered to guide the Bachelor to this place, where they might get a supply of provisions, and even found their colony.

The Spaniards hailed the words of Vasco

Nuñez, as if revealing a land of promise. The Bachelor adopted his advice, and guided by him, set sail for the village, determined to eject the inhabitants, and take possession of it as the seat of government. Arrived at the river, he landed, put his men in martial array, and marched along the banks. The place was governed by a brave cacique named Zemaco. He sent off the women and children to a place of safety, and posting himself with five hundred of his warriors on a height, prepared to give the intruders a warm reception. The Bachelor was a discoverer at all points, pious, daring, and rapacious. On beholding this martial array, he recommended himself and his followers to God, making a vow in their name to "Our Lady of Antigua," whose image is adored with great devotion in Seville, that the first church and town which they built should be dedicated to her, and that they would make a pilgrimage to Seville to offer the spoils of the heathen at her shrine. Having thus endeavored to propitiate the favor of Heaven, and to retain the holy Virgin in his cause, he next proceeded to secure the fidelity of his followers. Doubting that they might have some lurking dread of poisoned arrows, he exacted from them all an oath that they would not turn their backs upon the foe, whatever might happen. Never did

warrior enter into battle with more preliminary forms and covenants than the Bachelor Enciso. All these points being arranged, he assumed the soldier, and attacked the enemy with such valor that, though they made at first a show of fierce resistance, they were soon put to flight, and many of them slain. The Bachelor entered the village in triumph, took possession of it by unquestionable right of conquest, and plundered all the hamlets and houses of the surrounding country; collecting great quantities of food and cotton, with bracelets, anklets, plates, and other ornaments of gold, to the value of ten thousand *castellanos*.* His heart was wonderfully elated by his victory and his booty; his followers, also, after so many hardships and disasters, gave themselves up to joy at this turn of good fortune, and it was unanimously agreed that the seat of government should be established in this village, to which, in fulfilment of his vow, Enciso gave the name of Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darien.

Chapter X.

THE BACHELOR ENCISO UNDERTAKES THE COMMAND —HIS DOWNFALL.

The Bachelor Enciso now entered upon the exercise of his civil functions as alcalde mayor,

* Equivalent to a present sum of $53,259.

and lieutenant of the absent governor, Ojeda. His first edict was stern and peremptory; he forbade all trafficking with the natives for gold, on private account, under pain of death. This was in conformity to royal command; but it was little palatable to men who had engaged in the enterprise in the hopes of enjoying free trade, lawless liberty, and golden gains. They murmured among themselves, and insinuated that Encisco intended to reserve all the profits to himself.

Vasco Nuñez was the first to take advantage of the general discontent. He had risen to consequence among his fellow-adventurers, from having guided them to this place, and from his own intrinsic qualities; being hardy, bold, and intelligent, and possessing the random spirit and open-handed generosity common to a soldier of fortune, and calculated to dazzle and delight the multitude.

He bore no good will to the Bachelor, recollecting his threat of landing him on an uninhabited island, when he escaped from San Domingo. He sought therefore to make a party against him, and to unseat him from his command. He attacked him in his own way, with legal weapons, questioning the legitimacy of his pretensions. The boundary line, he observed, which separated the jurisdictions of

Ojeda and Nicuesa, ran through the centre of the gulf of Uraba. The village of Darien lay on the western side, which had been allotted to Nicuesa. Enciso therefore as alcalde mayor and lieutenant of Ojeda could have no jurisdiction here, and his assumed authority was a sheer usurpation.

The Spaniards, already incensed at the fiscal regulations of Enciso, were easily convinced; so with one accord they refused allegiance to him; and the unfortunate Bachelor found the chair of authority to which he had so fondly and anxiously aspired, suddenly wrested from under him, before he had well time to take his seat.

Chapter XI.

PERPLEXITIES AT THE COLONY—ARRIVAL OF COLMENARES.

To depose the Bachelor had been an easy matter, for most men are ready to assist in pulling down; but to choose a successor was a task of far more difficulty. The people at first agreed to elect mere civil magistrates, and accordingly appointed Vasco Nuñez and one Zemudio as alcaldes, together with a cavalier of some merit of the name of Valdivia, as regidor. They soon, however, became dissatisfied with

this arrangement, and it was generally considered advisable to vest the authority in one person. Who this person should be was now the question. Some proposed Nicuesa, as they were within his province; others were strenuous for Vasco Nuñez. A violent dispute ensued, which was carried on with such heat and obstinacy, that many, anxious for a quiet life, declared it would be better to reinstate Enciso until the pleasure of the King should be known.

In the height of these factious altercations, the Spaniards were aroused one day by the thundering of cannon from the opposite side of the gulf, and beheld columns of smoke rising from the hills. Astonished at signals of civilized man on these wild shores, they replied in the same manner, and in a short time two ships were seen standing across the gulf. They proved to be an armament commanded by one Rodrigo de Colmenares, and were in search of Nicuesa with supplies. They had met with the usual luck of adventurers on this disastrous coast, storms at sea and savage foes on shore, and many of their number had fallen by poisoned arrows. Colmenares had touched at San Sebastian, to learn tidings of Nicuesa; but, finding the fortress in ruins, had made signals, in hopes of being heard by the Spaniards,

should they be yet lingering in the neighborhood.

The arrival of Colmenares caused a temporary suspension of the feuds of the colonists. He distributed provisions among them, and gained their hearts. Then, representing the legitimate right of Nicuesa to the command of all that part of the coast as a governor appointed by the King, he persuaded the greater part of the people to acknowledge his authority. It was generally agreed, therefore, that he should cruise along the coast in search of Nicuesa, and that Diego de Albitez, and an active member of the law, called the Bachelor Corral, should accompany him as ambassadors, to invite that cavalier to come and assume the government of Darien.

Chapter XII.

COLMENARES GOES IN QUEST OF NICUESA.

RODRIGO DE COLMENARES proceeded along the coast to the westward, looking into every bay and harbor, but for a long time without success. At length one day he discovered a brigantine at a small island in the sea. It was part of the armament of Nicuesa, and had been sent out by him to forage for provisions. By

this vessel he was piloted to the port of Nombre de Dios, the nominal capital of the unfortunate governor, but which was so surrounded and overshadowed by forests, that he might have passed by without noticing it.

The arrival of Colmenares was welcomed with transports and tears of joy. It was scarcely possible for him to recognize the once buoyant and brilliant Nicuesa in the squalid and dejected man before him. He was living in the most abject misery. Of all his once gallant and powerful band of followers, but sixty men remained, and those so feeble, yellow, emaciated, and woebegone that it was piteous to behold them.*

Colmenares distributed food among them,

*The harbor of Nombre de Dios continued for a long time to present traces of the sufferings of the Spaniards. We are told by Herrera, that several years after the time here mentioned, a band of eighty Spanish soldiers, commanded by Gonzalo de Badajos, arrived in the harbor with an intention of penetrating into the interior. They found there the ruined fort of Nicuesa, together with the skulls and bones, and crosses erected on heaps of stones, dismal mementos of his followers who had perished of hunger; the sight of which struck such horror and dismay into the hearts of the soldiers, that they would have abandoned their enterprise, had not their intrepid captain immediately sent away the ships, and thus deprived them of the means of retreating. Herrera, decad. xi., lib. i.

and told them that he had come to convey them to a plenteous country, and one rich in gold. When Nicuesa heard of the settlement of Darien, and that the inhabitants had sent for him to come and govern them, he was as a man suddenly revived from death. All the spirit and munificence of the cavalier again awakened in him. He gave a kind of banquet that very day to Colmenares and the ambassadors, from the provisions brought in the ship. He presided at his table with his former hilarity; and displayed a feat of his ancient office as royal carver, by holding up a fowl in the air, and dissecting it with wonderful adroitness.

Well would it have been for Nicuesa, had the sudden buoyancy of his feelings carried him no further; but adversity had not taught him prudence. In conversing with the envoys about the colony of Darien, he already assumed the tone of governor, and began to disclose the kind of policy with which he intended to rule. When he heard that great quantities of gold had been collected and retained by private individuals, his ire was kindled. He vowed to make them refund it, and even talked of punishing them for trespassing upon the privileges and monopolies of the Crown. This was the very error that had unseated the Bachelor Enciso from his government, and it was a strong

measure for one to threaten, who, as yet, was governor but in expectation. The menace was not lost upon the watchful ambassadors Diego de Albitez and the Bachelor Corral. They were put still more on the alert by a conversation held that very evening with Lope de Olano, who was still detained a prisoner for his desertion, but who found means to commune with the envoys, and to prejudice them against his unsuspecting commander. "Take warning," said he, "by my treatment. I sent relief to Nicuesa, and rescued him from death when starving on a desert island. Behold my recompense. He repays me with imprisonment and chains. Such is the gratitude the people of Darien may look for at his hands!"

The subtle Bachelor Corral and his fellow envoy laid these matters to heart, and took their measures accordingly. They hurried to depart before Nicuesa, and setting all sail on their caravel, hastened back to Darien. The moment they arrived they summoned a meeting of the principal inhabitants. "A blessed change we have made," said they, "in summoning this Diego de Nicuesa to the command! We have called in the stork to take the rule, who will not rest satisfied until he has devoured us." They then related, with the usual exaggeration, the unguarded threats which had

fallen from Nicuesa, and instanced his treatment of Olano as a proof of a tyrannous and ungrateful disposition.

The words of the subtle Bachelor Corral and his associate produced a violent agitation among the people, especially among those who had amassed treasures, which would have to be refunded. Nicuesa, too, by a transaction which almost destroys sympathy in his favor, gave time for their passions to ferment. On his way to Darien he stopped for several days among a group of small islands, for the purpose of capturing Indians to be sold as slaves. While committing these outrages against humanity, he sent forward Juan de Cayzedo in a boat, to announce his coming. His messenger had a private pique against him, and played him false. He assured the people of Darien, that all they had been told by their envoys concerning the tyranny and ingratitude of Nicuesa, was true; —that he treated his followers with wanton severity; that he took from them all they won in battle, saying the spoils were his rightful property; and that it was his intention to treat the people of Darien in the same manner. "What folly is it in you," added he, "being your own masters, and in such free condition, to send for a tyrant to rule over you!"

The people of Darien were convinced by this

concurring testimony, and confounded by the overwhelming evil they had thus invoked upon their heads. They had deposed Enciso for his severity, and they had thrown themselves into the power of one who threatened to be ten times more severe! Vasco Nuñez de Balboa observed their perplexity and consternation. He drew them one by one apart, and conversed with them in private. "You are cast down in heart," said he, "and so you might well be, were the evil beyond all cure. But do not despair; there is an effectual relief, and you hold it in your hands. If you have committed an error in inviting Nicuesa to Darien, it is easily remedied by not receiving him when he comes!" The obviousness and simplicity of the remedy struck every mind, and it was unanimously adopted.

Chapter XIII.

CATASTROPHE OF THE UNFORTUNATE NICUESA.

While this hostile plot was maturing at Darien, the unsuspecting Nicuesa pursued his voyage leisurely and serenely, and arrived in safety at the mouth of the river. On approaching the shore he beheld a multitude, headed by Vasco Nuñez, waiting, as he supposed, to

receive him with all due honor. He was about to land when the public procurator, or attorney, called to him with a loud voice, warning him not to disembark, but to return with all speed to his government at Nombre de Dios.

Nicuesa remained for a moment as if thunderstruck by so unlooked-for a salutation. When he recovered his self-possession, he reminded them that he had come at their own request; he entreated, therefore, that he might be allowed to land and have an explanation, after which he would be ready to act as they should think proper. His entreaties only provoked insolent replies, and threats of violence should he venture to put foot on shore. Night coming on he was obliged to stand out to sea, but returned the next morning hoping to find this capricious people in a different mood.

There did, indeed, appear to be a favorable change, for he was now invited to land. It was a mere stratagem to get him in their power, for no sooner did he set foot on shore than the multitude rushed forward to seize him. Among his many bodily endowments Nicuesa was noted for swiftness of foot. He now trusted to it for safety, and, throwing off the dignity of governor fled for his life along the shore, pursued by the rabble. He soon distanced his pursuers, and took refuge in the woods.

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who was himself a man of birth, seeing this high-bred cavalier reduced to such extremity, and at the mercy of a violent rabble, repented of what he had done. He had not anticipated such popular fury, and endeavored, though too late, to allay the tempest he had raised. He succeeded in preventing the people from pursuing Nicuesa into the forest, and then endeavored to mollify the vindictive rage of his fellow-alcalde, Zamudio, whose hostility was quickened by the dread of losing his office should the new governor be received, and who was supported in his boisterous conduct by the natural love of the multitude for what are called "strong measures." Nicuesa now held a parley with the populace through the mediation of Vasco Nuñez. He begged that, if they would not acknowledge him as governor, they would at least admit him as a companion. This they refused saying that if they admitted him in one capacity he would end by attaining to the other. He then implored that, if he could be admitted on no other terms, they would treat him as a prisoner, and put him in irons, for he would rather die among them than to return to Nombre de Dios to perish of famine or by the arrows of the Indians.

It was in vain that Vasco Nuñez exerted his eloquence to obtain some grace for this un-

happy cavalier. His voice was drowned by the vociferations of the multitude. Among these was a noisy, swaggering fellow named Francisco Benitez, a great talker and jester, who took a vulgar triumph in the distresses of a cavalier, and answered every plea in his behalf with scoffs and jeers. He was an adherent of the alcalde Zamudio and under his patronage felt emboldened to bluster. His voice was ever uppermost in the general clamor, until, to the expostulations of Vasco Nuñez he replied by merely bawling with great vociferation, "No, no, no !—we will receive no such fellow among us as Nicuesa !" The patience of Vasco Nuñez was exhausted; he availed himself of his authority as alcalde, and suddenly, before his fellow-magistrate could interfere, ordered the brawling ruffian to be rewarded with a hundred lashes, which were taled out roundly to him upon the shoulders.*

Seeing that the fury of the populace was not to be pacified, he sent word to Nicuesa to retire to his brigantine, and not to venture on shore until advised by him to do so. The counsel was fruitless. Nicuesa, above deceit himself, suspected it not in others. He retired to his brigantine, it is true, but suffered himself to be inveigled on shore by a deputation professing

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii., cap. 68.

to come on the part of the public, with offers to reinstate him as governor. He was scarcely landed when he was set upon by an armed band, headed by the base-minded Zamudio, who seized him, and compelled him, by menaces of death, to swear that he would immediately depart, and make no delay in any place until he had presented himself before the King and council in Castile.

In vain Nicuesa reminded them that he was governor of that territory, and representative of the King, and that they were guilty of treason in thus opposing him ; in vain he appealed to their humanity, or protested before God against their cruelty and persecution. The people were in that state of tumult when they are apt to add cruelty to injustice. Not content with expelling the discarded governor from their shores, they allotted him the worst vessel in the harbor, an old, crazy brigantine, totally unfit to encounter the perils and labors of the sea.

Seventeen followers embarked with him ; some being of his household and attached to his person : the rest were volunteers, who accompanied him out of respect and sympathy. The frail bark set sail on the 1st of March, 1511, and steered across the Caribbean Sea for the island of Hispaniola, but was never seen nor heard of more !

Various attempts have been made to penetrate the mystery that covers the fate of the brigantine and its crew. A rumor prevailed some years afterwards that several Spaniards wandering along the shore of Cuba found the following inscription carved on a tree:

Aqui feneciò el desdichado Nicuesa.*

Hence it was inferred that he and his followers had landed there and been massacred by the Indians. Las Casas, however, discredits this story. He accompanied the first Spaniards who took possession of Cuba, and heard nothing of the fact, as he most probably would have done had it really occurred. He imagines, rather, that the crazy bark was swallowed up by the storms and currents of the Caribbean Sea, or that the crew perished with hunger and thirst, having been but scantily supplied with provisions. The good old bishop adds, with the superstitious feeling prevalent in that age, that a short time before Nicuesa sailed from Spain on his expedition an astrologer warned him not to depart on the day he had appointed, or under a certain sign. The cavalier replied, however, that he had less confidence in the stars than in God who made them. "I recollect, moreover," adds Las Casas, "that about this time a

* Here perished the unfortunate Nicuesa.

comet was seen over this island of Hispaniola, which, if I do not forget, was in the shape of a sword; and it was said that a monk warned several of those about to embark with Nicuesa to avoid that captain, for the heavens foretold he was destined to be lost. The same, however," he concludes, "might be said of Alonso de Ojeda, who sailed at the same time, yet returned to San Domingo, and died in his bed."*

* Las Casas, *ubi sup.*, cap. 68.

VASCO NUÑEZ DE BALBOA,

DISCOVERER OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

Chapter I.

FACTIONS OF DARIEN—VASCO NUÑEZ ELEVATED TO THE COMMAND.

WE have traced the disastrous fortunes of Alonso de Ojeda and Diego de Nicuesa; we have now to record the story of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, an adventurer equally daring, far more renowned, and not less unfortunate, who in a manner rose upon their ruins.

When the bark disappeared from view which bore the ill-starred Nicuesa from the shores of Darien, the community relapsed into factions as to who should have the rule. The Bachelor Enciso insisted upon his claims as paramount, but met with a powerful opponent in Vasco

Nuñez, who had become a great favorite with the people, from his frank and fearless character, and his winning affability. In fact, he was peculiarly calculated to manage the fiery and factious yet generous and susceptible nature of his countrymen; for the Spaniards, though proud and resentful, and impatient of indignity and restraint, are easily dazzled by valor, and won by courtesy and kindness. Vasco Nuñez had the external requisites also to captivate the multitude. He was now about thirty-five years of age; tall, well-formed, and vigorous, with reddish hair, and an open, prepossessing countenance. His office of alcalde, while it clothed him with influence and importance, tempered those irregular and dissolute habits he might have indulged while a mere soldier of fortune; and his superior talent soon gave him a complete ascendency over his official colleague Zamudio. He was thus enabled to set on foot a vigorous opposition to Enciso. Still he proceeded according to the forms of law, and summoned the Bachelor to trial, on the charge of usurping the powers of alcalde mayor, on the mere appointment of Alonso de Ojeda, whose jurisdiction did not extend to this province.

Enciso was an able lawyer, and pleaded his cause skilfully; but his claims were, in fact,

Native Hut—Isthmus of Darien

Redrawn from an old print

fallacious, and had they not been so he had to deal with men who cared little for law; who had been irritated with his legal exactions, and who were disposed to be governed by a man of the sword rather than of the robe. He was readily found guilty, therefore, and thrown into prison, and all his property was confiscated. This was a violent verdict, and rashly executed; but justice seemed to grow fierce and wild when transplanted to the wilderness of the New World. Still there is no place where wrong can be committed with impunity; the oppression of the Bachelor Enciso though exercised under the forms of law and in a region remote from the pale of civilized life, redounded to the eventual injury of Vasco Nuñez, and contributed to blast the fruits of that ambition it was intended to promote.

The fortunes of the enterprising Bachelor had indeed run strangely counter to the prospects with which he had embarked at San Domingo. He had become a culprit at the bar instead of a judge upon the bench; and was now left to ruminate in a prison on the failure of his late attempt at general command. His friends, however, interceded warmly in his behalf, and at length obtained his release from confinement, and permission for him to return to Spain. Vasco Nuñez foresaw that the lawyer would be

apt to plead his cause more effectually at the court of Castile, than he had done before the partial and prejudiced tribunal of Darien. He prevailed upon his fellow-alcalde, Zamudio, therefore, who was implicated with him in the late transactions, to return to Spain in the same vessel with the Bachelor, so as to be on the spot to answer his charges, and to give a favorable report of the case. He was also instructed to set forth the services of Vasco Nuñez, both in guiding the colonists to this place, and in managing the affairs of the settlement; and to dwell with emphasis on the symptoms of great riches in the surrounding country.

The Bachelor and the alcalde embarked in a small caravel; and, as it was to touch at Hispaniola, Vasco Nuñez sent his confidential friend, the regidor Valvidia, to that island to obtain provisions and recruits. He secretly put into his hands a round sum of gold as a present to Miguel de Pasamonte, the royal treasurer of Hispaniola, whom he knew to have great credit with the King, and to be invested with extensive powers, craving at the same time his protection in the New World and his influence at court.

Having taken these shrewd precautions, Vasco Nuñez saw the caravel depart without dismay, though bearing to Spain his most dan-

gerous enemy ; he consoled himself, moreover, with the reflection that it likewise bore off his fellow-alcalde, Zamudio, and thus left him in sole command of the colony.

Chapter III.

EXPEDITION TO COYBA—VASCO NUÑEZ RECEIVES THE DAUGHTER OF A CACIQUE AS HOSTAGE.

VASCO NUÑEZ now exerted himself to prove his capacity for the government to which he had aspired ; and as he knew that no proof was more convincing to King Ferdinand than ample remittances, and that gold covered all sins in the New World, his first object was to discover those parts of the country which most abounded in the precious metals. Having exaggerated reports of the riches of a province about thirty leagues distant, called Coyba, he sent Francisco Pizarro with six men to explore it.

The cacique Zemaco, the native lord of Darien, who cherished a bitter hostility against the European intruders, and hovered with his warriors about the settlement, received notice of this detachment from his spies, and planted himself in ambush to waylay and destroy it. The Spaniards had scarcely proceeded three leagues along the course of the river when

a host of savages burst upon them from the surrounding thickets, uttering frightful yells and discharging showers of stones and arrows. Pizarro and his men, though sorely bruised and wounded, rushed into the thickest of the foe, slew many, wounded more, and put the rest to flight; but fearing another assault made a precipitate retreat, leaving one of their companions, Francisco Hernan, disabled on the field. They arrived at the settlement crippled and bleeding; but when Vasco Nuñez heard the particulars of the action, his anger was roused against Pizarro, and he ordered him, though wounded, to return immediately and recover the disabled man. "Let it not be said, for shame," said he, "that Spaniards fled before savages, and left a comrade in their hands!" Pizarro felt the rebuke, returned to the scene of combat, and brought off Francisco Hernan in safety.

Nothing having been heard of Nicuesa since his departure, Vasco Nuñez despatched two brigantines for those followers of that unfortunate adventurer who had remained at Nombre de Dios. They were overjoyed at being rescued from their forlorn situation, and conveyed to a settlement where there was some prospect of comfortable subsistence. The brigantines in coasting the shores of the Isthmus picked up two Spaniards clad in painted skins, and look-

ing as wild as the native Indians. These men to escape some punishment had fled from the ship of Nicuesa about a year and a half before, and taken refuge with Careta, the cacique of Coyba. The savage chieftain had treated them with hospitable kindness; their first return for which, now that they found themselves safe among their countrymen, was to advise the latter to invade the cacique in his dwelling, where they assured them they would find immense booty. Finding their suggestions listened to, one of them proceeded to Darien, to serve as a guide to any expedition that might be set on foot; the other returned to the cacique, to assist in betraying him.

Vasco Nuñez was elated by the intelligence received through these vagabonds of the wilderness. He chose a hundred and thirty well-armed and resolute men, and set off for Coyba. The cacique received the Spaniards in his mansion with the accustomed hospitality of a savage, setting before them meat and drink, and whatever his house afforded; but when Vasco Nuñez asked for a large supply of provisions for the colony, he declared that he had none to spare, his people having been prevented from cultivating the soil by a war which he was waging with the neighboring cacique of Ponca. The Spanish outcast, who had remained to be-

tray his benefactor, now took Vasco Nuñez aside, and assured him that the cacique had an abundant hoard of provisions in secret; he advised him, however, to seem to believe his words, and to make a pretended departure for Darien with his troops, but to return in the night and take the village by surprise. Vasco Nuñez adopted the advice of the traitor. He took a cordial leave of Careta, and set off for the settlement. In the dead of the night, however, when the savages were buried in deep sleep, Vasco Nuñez led his men into the midst of the village, and before the inhabitants could rouse themselves to resistance made captives of Careta, his wives and children, and many of his people. He discovered also the hoard of provisions, with which he loaded two brigantines, and returned with his booty and his captives to Darien.

When the unfortunate cacique beheld his family in chains, and in the hands of strangers, his heart was wrung with despair. "What have I done," said he to Vasco Nuñez, "that thou shouldst treat me thus cruelly? None of thy people ever came to my land that were not fed, and sheltered, and treated with loving kindness. When thou camest to my dwelling did I meet thee with a javelin in my hand? Did I not set meat and drink before thee, and

Several Kinds of Dances—Natives of New Spain

Redrawn from Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

welcome thee as a brother? Set me free, therefore, with my family and people, and we will remain thy friends. We will supply thee with provisions, and reveal to thee the riches of the land. Dost thou doubt my faith? Behold my daughter, I give her to thee as a pledge of friendship. Take her for thy wife, and be assured of the fidelity of her family and her people!"

Vasco Nuñez felt the force of these words, and knew the importance of forming a strong alliance among the natives. The captive maid, also, as she stood trembling and dejected before him, found great favor in his eyes, for she was young and beautiful. He granted, therefore, the prayer of the cacique, and accepted his daughter, engaging, moreover, to aid the father against his enemies on condition of his furnishing provisions to the colony.

Careta remained three days at Darien, during which time he was treated with the utmost kindness. Vasco Nuñez took him on board of his ships and showed him every part of them. He displayed before him also the war-horses, with their armor and rich caparisons, and astonished him with the thunder of artillery. Lest he should be too much daunted by these warlike spectacles, he caused the musicians to perform a harmonious concert on their instru-

ments, at which the cacique was lost in admiration. Thus having impressed him with a wonderful idea of the power and endowments of his new allies, he loaded him with presents, and permitted him to depart.*

Careta returned joyfully to his territories, and his daughter remained with Vasco Nuñez, willingly for his sake giving up her family and native home. They were never married, but she considered herself his wife, as she really was, according to the usages of her own country; and he treated her with fondness, allowing her gradually to acquire great influence over him. To his affection for this damsel his ultimate ruin is in some measure to be ascribed.

Chapter VIII.

VASCO NUÑEZ HEARS OF A SEA BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.

VASCO NUÑEZ kept his word with the father of his Indian beauty. Taking with him eighty men, and his companion-in-arms, Rodrigo Enriquez de Colmenares, he repaired by sea to Coyba, the province of the cacique. Here landing, he invaded the territories of Ponca, the great adversary of Careta, and obliged him

* P. Martyr, decad. iii., cap. 6.

to take refuge in the mountains. He then ravaged his lands, and sacked his villages, in which he found considerable booty. Returning to Coyba, where he was joyfully entertained by Careta, he next made a friendly visit to the adjacent province of Comagre, which was under the sway of a cacique of the same name, who had 3000 fighting men at his command.

This province was situated at the foot of a lofty mountain in a beautiful plain, twelve leagues in extent. On the approach of Vasco Nuñez, the cacique came forth to meet him, attended by seven sons, all fine young men, the offspring of his various wives. He was followed by his principal chiefs and warriors, and by a multitude of his people. The Spaniards were conducted with great ceremony to the village, where quarters were assigned them, and they were furnished with abundance of provisions, and men and women were appointed to attend upon them.

The dwelling of the cacique surpassed any they had yet seen for magnitude, and for the skill and solidity of the architecture. It was one hundred and fifty paces in length, and eighty in breadth, founded upon great logs, surrounded with a stone wall ; while the upper part was of woodwork, curiously interwoven,

and wrought with such beauty as to cause surprise and admiration. It contained many commodious apartments. There were storerooms also; one filled with bread, with venison, and other provisions; another with various spirituous beverages, which the Indians made from maize, from a species of the palm, and from roots of different kinds. There was also a great hall in a retired and secret part of the building, wherein Comagre preserved the bodies of his ancestors and relatives. These had been dried by the fire, so as to free them from corruption, and afterwards wrapped in mantles of cotton, richly wrought, and interwoven with pearls and jewels of gold, and with certain stones held precious by the natives. They were then hung about the hall with cords of cotton, and regarded with great reverence, if not with religious devotion.

The eldest son of the cacique was of a lofty and generous spirit, and distinguished above the rest by his superior intelligence and sagacity. Perceiving, says old Peter Martyr, that the Spaniards were a "wandering kind of men, living only by shifts and spoil," he sought to gain favor for himself and family by gratifying their avarice. He gave Vasco Nuñez and Colmenares, therefore, 4000 ounces of gold, wrought into various ornaments, together with

Portrait of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa

Redrawn from Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

sixty slaves, captives taken in the wars. Vasco Nuñez ordered one fifth of the gold to be weighed out and set apart for the Crown, and the rest to be shared among his followers.

The division of the gold took place in the porch of the dwelling of Comagre, in the presence of the youthful cacique who had made the gift. As the Spaniards were weighing it out a violent quarrel arose among them as to the size and value of the pieces which fell to their respective shares. The high-minded savage was disgusted at this sordid brawl among beings whom he had regarded with such reverence. In the first impulse of his disdain he struck the scales with his fist, and scattered the glittering gold about the porch. "Why," said he, "should you quarrel for such a trifle? If this gold is indeed so precious in your eyes, that for it alone you abandon your homes, invade the peaceful lands of others, and expose yourselves to such sufferings and perils, I will tell you of a region where you may gratify your wishes to the utmost. Behold those lofty mountains," continued he, pointing to the south; "beyond these lies a mighty sea, which may be discerned from their summit. It is navigated by a people who have vessels almost as large as yours, and furnished like them with sails and oars. All the streams which flow

down the southern side of those mountains into that sea abound in gold; and the kings who reign upon its borders eat and drink out of golden vessels. Gold, in fact, is as plentiful and common among those people of the south as iron is among you Spaniards."

Vasco Nuñez inquired eagerly as to the means of penetrating to this sea, and to the opulent regions on its shores. "The task," replied the prince, "is difficult and dangerous. You must pass through the territories of many powerful caciques, who will oppose you with hosts of warriors. Some parts of the mountains are infested by fierce and cruel cannibals, a wandering, lawless race; but above all you have to encounter the great cacique Tubanamà, whose territories are at a distance of six days' journey, and more rich in gold than any other province; this cacique will be sure to come forth against you with a mighty force. To accomplish your enterprise therefore will require at least a thousand men armed like those who follow you."

The youthful cacique gave him further information on the subject, collected from various captives taken in battle, and from one of his own nation, who had been for a long time in captivity to Tubanamà, the powerful cacique of the golden realm. He moreover offered to

prove the sincerity of his words by accompanying Vasco Nuñez, in any expedition to those parts, at the head of his father's warriors.

Such was the first intimation received by Vasco Nuñez of the Pacific Ocean and its golden realms, and it had an immediate effect upon his whole character and conduct. This hitherto wandering and desperate man had now an enterprise opened to his ambition, which, if accomplished, would elevate him to fame and fortune, and entitle him to rank among the great captains and discoverers of the earth. Henceforth the discovery of the sea beyond the mountains was the great object of his thoughts, and his whole spirit seemed roused and ennobled by the idea.

He hastened his return to Darien, to make the necessary preparations for this splendid enterprise. Before departing from the province of Comagre, he baptized that cacique by the name of Don Carlos, and performed the same ceremony upon his sons and several of his subjects;—thus singularly did avarice and religion go hand in hand in the conduct of the Spanish discoverers.

Scarcely had Vasco Nuñez returned to Darien, when the regidor Valdivia arrived from Hispaniola, but with no more provisions than could be brought in his small caravel. These

were soon consumed, and the general scarcity continued. It was heightened by a violent tempest of thunder, lightning, and rain, which brought such torrents from the mountains that the river swelled and overflowed its banks, laying waste all the adjacent fields which had been cultivated. In this extremity Vasco Nuñez despatched Valdivia a second time to Hispaniola for provisions. Animated also by the loftier views of his present ambition, he wrote to Don Diego Columbus, who governed at San Domingo, informing him of the intelligence he had received of a great sea and opulent realms beyond the mountains, and entreating him to use his influence with the King that one thousand men might be immediately furnished him for the prosecution of so grand a discovery. He sent him also the amount of fifteen thousand crowns of gold, to be remitted to the King, as the royal fifth of what had already been collected under his jurisdiction. Many of his followers, likewise, forwarded sums of gold to be remitted to their creditors in Spain. In the meantime, Vasco Nuñez prayed the Admiral to yield him prompt succor to enable him to keep his footing in the land, representing the difficulty he had in maintaining, with a mere handful of men, so vast a country in a state of subjection.

Chapter IV.

EXPEDITION OF VASCO NUÑEZ IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN TEMPLE OF DOBAYBA.

[1512.]

WHILE Vasco Nuñez awaited the result of this mission of Valdivia, his active disposition prompted foraging excursions into the surrounding country.

Among various rumors of golden realms in the interior of this unknown land, was one concerning a province called Dobayba, situated about forty leagues distant, on the banks of a great river which emptied itself by several mouths into a corner of the gulf of Uraba.

This province derived its name, according to Indian tradition, from a mighty female of the olden time, the mother of the god who created the sun and moon and all good things. She had power over the elements, sending thunder and lightning to lay waste the lands of those who displeased her, but showering down fertility and abundance upon the possessions of her faithful worshippers. Others described her as having been an Indian princess, who once reigned among the mountains of Dobayba, and was renowned throughout the land for her supernatural power and wisdom. After her death divine honors were paid her, and a great temple

was erected for her worship. Hither the natives repaired from far and near on a kind of pilgrimage, bearing offerings of their most valuable effects. The caciques who ruled over distant territories also sent golden tributes at certain times of the year to be deposited in this temple, and slaves to be sacrificed at this shrine. At one time, it was added, this worship fell into disuse, the pilgrimages were discontinued, and the caciques neglected to send their tributes; whereupon the deity as a punishment inflicted a drought upon the country. The springs and fountains failed, the rivers were dried up; the inhabitants of the mountains were obliged to descend into the plains, where they digged pits and wells, but these likewise failing, a great part of the nations perished with thirst. The remainder hastened to propitiate the deity by tributes and sacrifices, and thus succeeded in averting her displeasure. In consequence of offerings of the kind, made for generations from all parts of the country, the temple was said to be filled with treasure, and its walls to be covered with golden gifts.* In addition to the tale of this temple, the Indians gave marvellous accounts of the general wealth of this province, declaring that it abounded with mines of gold,

* Peter Martyr, decad. iii., cap. 6. *Idem*, decad. vii., cap. 10.

the veins of which reached from the dwelling of the cacique to the borders of his dominions.

To penetrate to this territory, and above all to secure the treasures of the golden temple, was an enterprise suited to the adventurous spirit of the Spaniards. Vasco Nuñez chose one hundred and seventy of his hardiest men for the purpose. Embarking them in two brigantines and a number of canoes, he set sail from Darien, and after standing about nine leagues to the east, came to the mouth of the Rio Grande de San Juan, or the Great River of St. John, also called the Atrato, which is since ascertained to be one of the branches of the river Darien. Here he detached Rodrigo Enriquez de Colmenares with one third of his forces to explore the stream, while he himself proceeded with the residue to another branch of the river, which he was told flowed from the province of Dobayba, and which he ascended, flushed with sanguine expectations.*

* In recording this expedition, the author has followed the old Spanish narratives, written when the face of the country was but little known, and he was much perplexed to reconcile the accounts given of numerous streams with the rivers laid down on modern maps. By a clear and judicious explanation, given in the recent work of Don Manuel Josef Quintana, it appears that the different streams explored by Vasco Nuñez and Colmenares were all branches of one grand

His old enemy Zemaco, the cacique of Darien, however, had discovered the object of his expedition, and had taken measures to disappoint it; repairing to the province of Dobayba, he had prevailed upon its cacique to retire at the approach of the Spaniards, leaving his country deserted.

Vasco Nuñez found a village situated in a marshy neighborhood on the banks of the river, and mistook it for the residence of the cacique; it was silent and abandoned. There was not an Indian to be met with from whom he could obtain any information about the country, or who could guide him to the golden temple. He was disappointed also in his hopes of obtaining a supply of provisions, but he found weapons of various kinds hanging in the deserted houses, and gathered jewels and pieces of gold to the value of seven thousand *castellanos*. Discouraged by the savage look of the surrounding wilderness, which was perplexed by deep morasses, and having no guides to aid him in explor-

river, which, descending from the mountains of the interior, winds about in crystal streams among the plains and morasses bordering the bottom of the great gulf of Darien, and discharges itself by various mouths into the gulf. In fact, the stream which ran by the infant city of Santa Maria de la Antigua was but one of its branches, a fact entirely unknown to Vasco Nuñez and his companions.

ing it, he put all the booty he had collected into two large canoes, and made his way back to the gulf of Uraba. Here he was assailed by a violent tempest, which nearly wrecked his two brigantines, and obliged him to throw a great part of their cargoes overboard. The two canoes containing the booty were swallowed up by the raging sea, and all their crews perished.

Thus baffled and tempest-tossed, Vasco Nuñez at length succeeded in getting into what is termed the Grand River, which he ascended and rejoined Colmenares and his detachment. They now extended their excursions up a stream which emptied itself into the Grand River, and which, from the dark hue of its waters, they called Rio Negro, or the Black River. They also explored certain other tributary streams branching from it, though not without occasional skirmishes with the natives.

Ascending one of these minor rivers with a part of his men, Vasco Nuñez came to the territories of a cacique named Abibeyba, who reigned over a region of marshes and shallow lakes. The habitations of the natives were built amidst the branches of immense and lofty trees. They were large enough to contain whole family connections, and were constructed partly of wood, partly of a kind of wicker-work, combining strength and pliability, and

yielding uninjured to the motion of the branches when agitated by the wind. The inhabitants ascend to them with great agility, by light ladders, formed of great reeds split through the middle, for the reeds on this coast grow to the thickness of a man's body. These ladders they drew up after them at night, or in case of attack. These habitations were well stocked with provisions ; but the fermented beverages, of which these people had always a supply, were buried in vessels in the earth at the foot of the tree, lest they should be rendered turbid by the rocking of the houses. Close by, also, were the canoes with which they navigated the rivers and ponds of their marshy country, and followed their main occupation of fishing.

On the approach of the Spaniards the Indians took refuge in their tree built castles, and drew up the ladders. The former called upon them to descend, and to fear nothing. Upon this the cacique replied, entreating that he might not be molested, seeing he had done them no injury. They threatened, unless he came down, to fell the trees, or to set fire to them, and burn him and his wives and children. The cacique was disposed to consent, but was prevented by the entreaties of his people. Upon this the Spaniards prepared to hew down the trees but were assailed by showers of stones. They cov-

Attack on Natives in Trees

From Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

ered themselves, however, with their bucklers, assailed the trees vigorously with their hatchets, and soon compelled the inhabitants to capitulate. The cacique descended with his wife and two of his children. The first demand of the Spaniards was for gold. He assured them he had none; for, having no need of it, he had never made it an object of his search. Being importuned, however, he said that if he were permitted to repair to certain mountains at a distance, he would in a few days return and bring them what they desired. They permitted him to depart, retaining his wife and children as hostages, but they saw no more of the cacique. After remaining here a few days and regaling on the provisions which they found in abundance, they continued their foraging expeditions, often opposed by the bold and warlike natives, and suffering occasional loss, but inflicting great havoc on their opposers.

Having thus overrun a considerable extent of country, and no grand object presenting to lure him on to further enterprise, Vasco Nuñez at length returned to Darien with the spoils and captives he had taken, leaving Bartolome Hurtado, with thirty men, in an Indian village on the Rio Negro, or Black River, to hold the country in subjection. Thus terminated the first expedition in quest of the golden temple

of Dobayba, which, for some time, continued to be a favorite object of enterprise among the adventurers of Darien.

Chapter V.

DISASTER ON THE BLACK RIVER—INDIAN PLOT AGAINST DARIEN.

Bartolomę Hurtado, being left to his own discretion on the banks of the Black River, occupied himself occasionally in hunting the scattered natives who straggled about the surrounding forests. Having in this way picked up twenty-four captives, he put them on board of a large canoe, like so much live-stock, to be transported to Darien and sold as slaves. Twenty of his followers, who were infirm either from wounds or the diseases of the climate, embarked also in the canoe, so that only ten men remained with Hurtado.

The great canoe, thus heavily freighted, descended the Black River slowly, between banks overhung with forests. Zemaco, the indefatigable cacique of Darien, was on the watch, and waylaid the ark with four canoes filled with warriors, armed with war-clubs and lances hardened in the fire. The Spaniards, being sick, could make but feeble resistance; some

were massacred, others leaped into the river and were drowned. Two only escaped, by clinging to two trunks of trees that were floating down the river, and covering themselves with the branches. Reaching the shore in safety, they returned to Bartolome Hurtado with the tragical tidings of the death of his followers. Hurtado was so disheartened by the news, and so dismayed at his own helpless situation, in the midst of a hostile country, that he resolved to abandon the fatal shore of the Black River, and return to Darien. He was quickened in this resolution by receiving intimation of a conspiracy forming among the natives. The implacable Zemaco had drawn four other caciques into a secret plan to assemble their vassals and make a sudden attack upon Darien. Hurtado hastened with the remnant of his followers to carry tidings to the settlement of this conspiracy. Many of the inhabitants were alarmed at his intelligence; others treated it as a false rumor of the Indians, and no preparations were made against what might be a mere imaginary danger.

Fortunately for the Spaniards, among the female captives owned by Vasco Nuñez was an Indian damsel named Fulvia, to whom, in consequence of her beauty, he had shown great favor, and who had become strongly attached

to him. She had a brother among the warriors of Zemaco, who often visited her in secret. In one of his visits he informed her that on a certain night the settlement would be attacked and every Spaniard destroyed. He charged her therefore to hide herself that night in a certain place until he should come to her aid lest she should be slain in the confusion of the massacre.

When her brother was gone a violent struggle took place in the bosom of the Indian girl between her feeling for her family and her people, and her affection for Vasco Nuñez. The latter at length prevailed, and she revealed all that had been told to her. The Spaniard prevailed on her to send for her brother under pretence of aiding her to escape. Having him in his power he extorted from him all that he knew of the designs of the enemy. His confession showed what imminent danger had been lurking round Vasco Nuñez in his most unsuspecting moments. The prisoner informed him that he had been one of forty Indians sent some time before by the cacique Zemaco to Vasco Nuñez, in seeming friendship, to be employed by him in cultivating fields adjacent to the settlement. They had secret orders however to take an opportunity, when the Spaniard should come forth to inspect their work,

to set upon him in an unguarded moment and destroy him. Fortunately, Vasco Nuñez always visited the fields mounted on his war-horse, and armed with lance and target, and the Indians were so awed by his martial appearance, and by the terrible animal he bestrode, that they dared not attack him.

Foiled in this and other attempts of the kind, Zemaco resorted to the conspiracy with which the settlement was now menaced. Five caciques had joined in the confederacy. They had prepared a hundred canoes, amassed provisions for an army, and concerted to assemble five thousand picked warriors at a certain time and place; with these they were to make an attack on the settlement by land and water, in the middle of the night, and to slaughter every Spaniard.

Having learnt where the confederate chiefs were to be found, and where they had deposited their provisions, Vasco Nuñez chose seventy of his best men, well armed, and made a circuit by land, while Colmenares, with sixty men, sallied forth secretly in four canoes guided by the Indian prisoner. In this way they surprised the general of the Indian army and several of the principal confederates, and got possession of all their provisions, though they failed to capture the formidable Zemaco. The

Indian general was shot to death with arrows, and the leaders of the conspiracy were hanged in presence of their captive followers. The defeat of this deep-laid plan, and the punishment of its devisers, spread terror throughout the neighboring provinces, and prevented any further hostilities. Vasco Nuñez however caused a strong fortress of wood to be immediately erected, to guard against any future assaults of the savages.

Chapter VII.

FURTHER FACTIONS IN THE COLONY—ARROGANCE OF ALONZO PEREZ AND THE BACHELOR CORRAL.

A CONSIDERABLE time had now elapsed since the departure of Valdivia for Hispaniola, yet no tidings had been received from him. Many began to fear that some disaster had befallen him ; while others insinuated that it was possible both he and Zamudio might have neglected the objects of their mission, and having appropriated to their own use the gold with which they had been intrusted, abandoned the colony to its fate.

Vasco Nuñez himself was harassed by these surmises, and by the dread lest the Bachelor Enciso should succeed in prejudicing the mind

of his sovereign against him. Impatient of this state of anxious suspense, he determined to repair to Spain, to communicate in person all that he had heard concerning the Southern sea, and to ask for the troops necessary for its discovery.

Every one, however, both friend and foe, exclaimed against such a measure, representing his presence as indispensable to the safety of the colony, from his great talents as a commander, and the fear entertained of him by the Indians.

After much debate and contention it was at length agreed that Juan de Cayzedo and Rodrigo Enriquez de Colmenares should go in his place, instructed to make all necessary representations to the King. Letters were written also containing extravagant accounts of the riches of the country, partly dictated by the sanguine hopes of the writers, and partly by the fables of the natives. The rumored wealth of the province of Dobayba, and the treasures of its golden temple were not forgotten; and an Indian was taken to Spain by the commissioners, a native of the province of Zenu, where gold was said to be gathered in nets stretched across the mountain streams. To give more weight to these stories every one contributed some portion of gold from his private hoard,

to be presented to the King in addition to the amount arising from his fifths.

But little time had elapsed after the departure of the commissioners when new dissensions broke out in the colony. It was hardly to be expected that a fortuitous assemblage of adventurers could remain long tranquil during a time of suffering under rulers of questionable authority. Vasco Nuñez, it is true, had risen by his courage and abilities ; but he had risen from among their ranks ; he was in a manner of their own creation ; and they had not become sufficiently accustomed to him as a governor to forget that he was recently but a mere soldier of fortune and an absconding debtor.

Their factious discontent, however, was directed at first against a favorite of Vasco Nuñez, rather than against himself. He had invested Bartolome Hurtado, the commander of the Black River, with considerable authority in the colony, and the latter gave great offence by his oppressive conduct. Hurtado had particularly aggrieved by his arrogance one Alonzo Perez de la Rua, a touchy cavalier, jealous of his honor, and peculiarly gifted with the sensitive punctilio of a Spaniard. Firing at some indignity, whether real or fancied, Alonzo Perez threw himself into the ranks of the disaffected, and was immediately chosen as

their leader. Thus backed by a faction, he clamored loudly for the punishment of Hurtado; and, finding his demands unattended to, threw out threats of deposing Vasco Nuñez. The latter, with his usual spirit and promptness, seized upon the testy Alonzo Perez, and threw him into prison, to digest his indignities and cool his passion at leisure.

The conspirators flew to arms to liberate their leader. The friends of Vasco Nuñez were equally on the alert. The two parties drew out in battle array in the public square, and a sanguinary conflict was on the point of taking place. Fortunately there were some cool heads left in the colony. These interfered at the critical moment, representing to the angry adversaries that, if they fought among themselves, and diminished their already scanty numbers, even the conquerors must eventually fall a prey to the Indians.

Their remonstrances had effect. A parley ensued, and, after much noisy debate, a kind of compromise was made. Alonzo Perez was liberated, and the mutineers dispersed quietly to their homes. The next day, however, they were again in arms, and seized upon Bartolome Hurtado; but after a little while were prevailed upon to set him free. Their factious views seemed turned to a higher object. They broke

forth into loud murmurs against Vasco Nuñez, complaining that he had not made a fair division of the gold and slaves taken in the late expeditions, and threatening to arrest him and bring him to account. Above all, they clamored for an immediate distribution of ten thousand *castellanos* in gold, yet unshared.

Vasco Nuñez understood too well the riotous nature of the people under him, and his own precarious hold on their obedience to attempt to cope with them in this moment of turbulence. He shrewdly determined, therefore, to withdraw from the sight of the multitude, and to leave them to divide the spoil among themselves, trusting to their own strife for his security. That very night he sallied forth into the country, under pretence of going on a hunting expedition.

The next morning the mutineers found themselves in possession of the field. Alonzo Perez, the pragmatical ringleader, immediately assumed the command, seconded by the Bachelor Corral. Their first measure was to seize upon the ten thousand *castellanos*, and divide them among the multitude, by way of securing their own popularity. The event proved the sagacity and forethought of Vasco Nuñez. Scarcely had these hot-headed intermeddlers entered upon the partition of the gold, than a

furious strife arose. Every one was dissatisfied with his share, considering his merits entitled to peculiar recompense. Every attempt to appease the rabble only augmented their violence, and in their rage they swore that Vasco Nuñez had always shown more judgment and discrimination in his distributions to men of merit.

The adherents of the latter now ventured to lift up their voices: "Vasco Nuñez," said they, "won the gold by his enterprise and valor, and would have shared it with the brave and the deserving; but these men have seized upon it by factious means, and would squander it upon their minions." The multitude, who, in fact, admired the soldier-like qualities of Vasco Nuñez, displayed one of the customary reverses of popular feeling. The touchy Alonzo Perez, his coadjutor the Bachelor Corral, and several other of the ringleaders, were seized, put into irons, and confined in the fortress; and Vasco Nuñez was recalled with loud acclamations to the settlement.

How long this pseudo-commander might have been able to manage the unsteady populace, it is impossible to say; but just at this juncture two ships arrived from Hispaniola, freighted with supplies, and bringing a reinforcement of one hundred and fifty men. They

brought also a commission to Vasco Nuñez, signed by Miguel de Pasamonte, the Royal Treasurer of Hispaniola, (to whom he had sent a private present of gold,) constituting him captain-general of the colony. It is doubtful whether Pasamonte possessed the power to confer such a commission, though it is affirmed that the King had clothed him with it, as a kind of check upon the authority of Admiral Don Diego Columbus, then Governor of Hispaniola, of whose extensive sway in the New World the monarch was secretly jealous. At any rate, the Treasurer appears to have acted in full confidence of the ultimate approbation of his sovereign.

Vasco Nuñez was rejoiced at receiving a commission which clothed him at least with the semblance of royal sanction. Feeling more assured in his situation, and being naturally of a generous and forgiving temper, he was easily prevailed upon, in this moment of exultation, to release and pardon Alonzo Perez, the Bachelor Corral, and the other ringleaders of the late commotions ; and for a time the feuds and factions of this petty community were lulled to repose.

Chapter VII.

VASCO NUÑEZ DETERMINES TO SEEK THE SEA BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.

[1513.]

THE temporary triumph of Vasco Nuñez was soon overcast by tidings from Spain. His late colleague the Alcalde Zamudio, wrote him word that the Bachelor Enciso had carried his complaints to the foot of the throne, and succeeded in rousing the indignation of the King, and had obtained a sentence in his favor, condemning Vasco Nuñez in costs and damages. Zamudio informed him in addition, that he would be immediately summoned to repair to Spain, and answer in person the criminal charges advanced against him, on account of the harsh treatment and probable death of the unfortunate Nicuesa.

Vasco Nuñez was at first stunned by this intelligence, which seemed at one blow to annihilate all his hopes and fortunes. He was a man, however, of prompt decision and intrepid spirit. The information received from Spain was private and informal; no order had yet arrived from the King; he was still master of his actions, and had control over the colony. One brilliant achievement might atone for all the past, and fix him in the favor of the mon-

arch. Such an achievement was within his reach—the discovery of the Southern sea. It is true a thousand soldiers had been required for the expedition, but were he to wait for their arrival from Spain, his day of grace would be past. It was a desperate thing to undertake the task with the handful of men at his command, but the circumstances of the case were desperate. Fame, fortune, life itself depended upon the successful and the prompt execution of the enterprise. To linger was to be lost.

Vasco Nuñez looked round upon the crew of daring and reckless adventurers that formed the colony, and chose one hundred and ninety of the most resolute, vigorous and devoted to his person. These he armed with swords, targets, cross-bows and arquebuses. He did not conceal from them the danger of the enterprise into which he was about to lead them; but the spirit of these Spanish adventurers was always roused by the idea of perilous and extravagant exploit. To aid his slender forces, he took with him a number of bloodhounds, which had been found to be terrific allies in Indian warfare.

The Spanish writers make particular mention of one of those animals, named Leoncico, which was a constant companion, and, as it were, body-guard of Vasco Nuñez, and de-

scribe him as minutely as they would a favorite warrior. He was of a middle size, but immensely strong; of a dull yellow or reddish color, with a black muzzle, and his body was scarred all over with wounds received in innumerable battles with the Indians. Vasco Nuñez always took him on his expeditions, and sometimes lent him to others, receiving for his services the same share of booty allotted to an armed man. In this way he gained by him in the course of his campaigns upwards of a thousand crowns. The Indians, it is said, had conceived such terror of this animal, that the very sight of him was sufficient to put a host of them to flight.*

In addition to these forces, Vasco Nuñez took with him a number of the Indians of Darien, whom he had won to him by kindness, and whose services were important from their knowledge of the wilderness, and of the habits and resources of savage life. Such was the motley armament that set forth from the little colony of Darien, under the guidance of a daring if not desperate commander, in quest of the great Pacific Ocean.

* Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, pt. ii., cap. 3, MS.

Chapter VIII.

EXPEDITION IN QUEST OF THE SOUTHERN SEA.

It was on the 1st of September that Vasco Nuñez embarked with his followers in a brigantine and nine large canoes or *pirogues*, followed by the cheers and good wishes of those who remained at the settlement. Standing to the northwestward he arrived without accident at Coyba, the dominion of the cacique Careta, whose daughter he had received as a pledge of amity. That Indian beauty had acquired a great influence over Vasco Nuñez, and appears to have cemented his friendship with her father and her people. He was received by the cacique with open arms, and furnished with guides and warriors to aid him in his enterprise.

Vasco Nuñez left about half of his men at Coyba, to guard the brigantine and canoes, while he should penetrate the wilderness with the residue. The importance of his present expedition not merely as affecting his own fortunes, but as it were unfolding a mighty secret of nature, seems to have impressed itself upon his spirit and to have given correspondent solemnity to his conduct. Before setting out upon his march he caused mass to be performed and offered up prayers to God for the success of his perilous undertaking.

Natives of New Spain

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"

It was on the 6th of September that he struck off for the mountains. The march was difficult and toilsome. The Spaniards, encumbered with the weight of their armor and weapons and oppressed by the heat of a tropical climate, were obliged to climb rocky precipices and to struggle through close and tangled forests. Their Indian allies aided them by carrying their ammunition and provisions, and by guiding them to the most practicable paths.

On the 8th of September they arrived at the village of Ponca, the ancient enemy of Careta. The village was lifeless and abandoned; the cacique and his people had fled to the fastnesses of the mountains. The Spaniards remained here several days to recruit the health of some of their number who had fallen ill. It was necessary also to procure guides acquainted with the mountain wilderness they were approaching. The retreat of Ponca was at length discovered, and he was prevailed upon, though reluctantly, to come to Vasco Nuñez. The latter had a peculiar facility in winning the confidence and friendship of the natives. The cacique was soon so captivated by his kindness, that he revealed to him in secret all he knew of the natural riches of the country. He assured him of the truth of what had been told him of a great *pechry* or sea be-

yond the mountains, and gave him several ornaments ingeniously wrought of fine gold, which had been brought from the countries upon its borders. He told him, moreover, that when he had attained the summit of a lofty ridge to which he pointed, and which seemed to rise up to the skies, he would behold that sea spread out far below him.

Animated by these accounts, Vasco Nuñez procured fresh guides from the cacique and prepared to ascend the mountains. Numbers of his men having fallen ill from fatigue and the heat of the climate, he ordered them to return slowly to Coyba, taking with him none but such as were in robust and vigorous health.

On the 20th of September he again set forward through a broken, rocky country, covered with a matted forest, and intersected by deep and turbulent streams, many of which it was necessary to cross upon rafts.

So toilsome was the journey that in four days they did not advance above ten leagues, and in the meantime they suffered excessively from hunger. At the end of this time they arrived at the province of a warlike cacique, named Quaraquà, who was at war with Ponca.

Hearing that a band of strangers were entering his territories guided by the subjects of his inveterate foe, the cacique took the field

with a large number of warriors, some armed with bows and arrows, others with long spears, or with double-handed maces of palm-wood, almost as heavy and hard as iron. Seeing the inconsiderable number of the Spaniards, they set upon them with furious yells, thinking to overcome them in an instant. The first discharge of fire-arms, however, struck them with dismay. They thought they were contending with demons who vomited forth thunder and lightning, especially when they saw their companions fall bleeding and dead beside them without receiving any apparent blow. They took to headlong flight, and were hotly pursued by the Spaniards and their bloodhounds. Some were transfixed with lances, others hewn down with swords, and many were torn to pieces by the dogs, so that Quaraquà and six hundred of his warriors were left dead upon the field.

A brother of the cacique and several chiefs were taken prisoners. They were clad in robes of white cotton. Either from their effeminate dress, or from the accusations of their enemies, the Spaniards were induced to consider them guilty of unnatural crimes, and in their abhorrence and disgust gave them to be torn to pieces by the bloodhounds.*

It is also affirmed, that among the prisoners

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. x., cap. i.

were several negroes, who had been slaves to the cacique. The Spaniards, we are told, were informed by the other captives, that these black men came from a region at no great distance, where there was a people of that color, with whom they were frequently at war. "These," adds the Spanish writer, "were the first negroes ever found in the New World, and I believe no others have since been discovered."*

After this sanguinary triumph, the Spaniards marched to the village of Quaraquà where they found considerable booty in gold and jewels. Of this Vasco Nuñez reserved one fifth for the Crown, and shared the rest liberally among his followers. The village was at the foot of the last mountain that remained for

* Peter Martyr, in his third decade, makes mention of these negroes in the following words: "About two days' journey distant from Quaraquà is a region inhabited only by black moors, exceeding fierce and cruel. It is supposed that in time past certain black moors sailed thither out of Ethiopia to rob, and that by shipwreck, or some other chance, they were driven to these mountains." As Martyr lived and wrote at the time, he of course related the mere rumor of the day, which all subsequent accounts have disproved. The other historians who mentioned the circumstance have probably repeated it from him. It must have risen from some misrepresentation, and is not entitled to credit.

them to climb; several of the Spaniards however were so disabled by wounds received in battle, or so exhausted by the fatigue and hunger they had endured, that they were unable to proceed. They were obliged therefore reluctantly to remain in the village, within sight of the mountain-top that commanded the long-sought prospect. Vasco Nuñez selected fresh guides from among his prisoners, who were natives of the province, and sent back the subjects of Ponca. Of the band of Spaniards who had set out with him in this enterprise, sixty-seven alone remained in sufficient health and spirits for this last effort. These he ordered to retire early to repose, that they might be ready to set off at the cool and fresh hour of daybreak, so as to reach the summit of the mountain before the noontide heat.

Chapter IX.

DISCOVERY OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

THE day had scarce dawned when Vasco Nuñez and his followers set forth from the Indian village, and began to climb the height. It was a severe and rugged toil for men so wayworn; but they were filled with new ardor

at the idea of the triumphant scene that was so soon to repay them for all their hardships.

About ten o'clock in the morning they emerged from the thick forests through which they had hitherto struggled, and arrived at a lofty and airy region of the mountain. The bald summit alone remained to be ascended; and their guides pointed to a moderate eminence, from which they said the Southern sea was visible.

Upon this Vasco Nuñez commanded his followers to halt, and that no man should stir from his place. Then, with a palpitating heart, he ascended alone the bare mountain-top. On reaching the summit, the long-desired prospect burst upon his view. It was as if a new world were unfolded to him, separated from all hitherto known by this mighty barrier of mountains. Below him extended a vast chaos of rock and forest, and green savannas and wandering streams, while at a distance the waters of the promised ocean glittered in the morning sun.

At this glorious prospect Vasco Nuñez sank upon his knees, and poured out thanks to God for being the first European to whom it was given to make that great discovery. He then called his people to ascend. "Behold, my friends," said he, "that glorious sight which

we have so much desired. Let us give thanks to God that he has granted us this great honor and advantage. Let us pray to Him to guide and aid us to conquer the sea and land which we have discovered, and which Christian has never entered to preach the holy doctrine of the Evangelists. As to yourselves, be as you have hitherto been, faithful and true to me, and by the favor of Christ you will become the richest Spaniards that have ever come to the Indies; you will render the greatest services to your king that ever vassal rendered to his lord; and you will have the eternal glory and advantage of all that is here discovered, conquered, and converted to our holy Catholic faith."

The Spaniards answered this speech by embracing Vasco Nuñez, and promising to follow him to death. Among them was a priest, named Andres de Vara, who lifted up his voice and chanted *Te Deum laudamus*—the usual anthem of Spanish discoverers. The rest, kneeling down, joined in the strain with pious enthusiasm and tears of joy; and never did a more sincere oblation rise to the Deity from a sanctified altar, than from that mountain summit. It was indeed one of the most sublime discoveries that had yet been made in the New World, and must have opened a boundless field of conjecture to the wondering Span-

iards. The imagination delights to picture forth the splendid confusion of their thoughts. Was this the great Indian Ocean, studded with precious islands, abounding in gold, in gems, in spices, and bordered by the gorgeous cities and wealthy marts of the East? or was it some lonely sea, locked up in the embraces of savage uncultivated continents, and never traversed by a bark, excepting the light pirogue of the savage? The latter could hardly be the case, for the natives had told the Spaniards of golden realms, and populous and powerful and luxurious nations upon its shores. Perhaps it might be bordered by various people, civilized in fact, though differing from Europe in their civilization; who might have peculiar laws and customs, and arts and sciences; who might form, as it were, a world of their own, intercommuning by this mighty sea, and carrying on commerce between their own islands and continents; but who might exist in total ignorance and independence of the other hemisphere.

Such may naturally have been the ideas suggested by the sight of this unknown ocean. It was the prevalent belief of the Spaniards, however, that they were the first Christians who had made the discovery. Vasco Nuñez therefore called upon all present to witness that he

took possession of that sea, its islands, and surrounding lands, in the name of the sovereigns of Castile, and the notary of the expedition made a testimonial of the same, to which all present, to the number of sixty-seven men, signed their names. He then caused a fair and tall tree to be cut down and wrought into a cross, which was elevated on the spot whence he had first beheld the sea. A mound of stones was likewise piled up to serve as a monument, and the names of the Castilian sovereigns were carved on the neighboring trees. The Indians beheld all these ceremonials and rejoicings in silent wonder, and while they aided to erect the cross, and piled up the mound of stones, marvelled exceedingly at the meaning of these monuments, little thinking that they marked the subjugation of their land.

The memorable event here recorded took place on the 26th of September, 1513; so that the Spaniards had spent twenty days in performing the journey from the province of Careta to the summit of the mountain, a distance which at present, it is said, does not require more than six days' travel. Indeed, the isthmus in this neighborhood is not more than eighteen leagues in breadth in its widest part, and in some places merely seven; but it consists of a ridge of extremely high and rugged mountains. When

the discoverers traversed it, they had no route but the Indian paths, and often had to force their way amidst all kinds of obstacles, both from the savage country and its savage inhabitants. In fact, the details of this narrative sufficiently account for the slowness of their progress, and present an array of difficulties and perils which, as has been well observed, none but those "men of iron" could have subdued and overcome.*

Chapter X.

VASCO NUÑEZ MARCHES TO THE SHORES OF THE SOUTH SEA.

[1513.]

HAVING taken possession of the Pacific Ocean and all its realms from the summit of the mountain, Vasco Nuñez now descended with his little band, to seek the regions of reputed wealth upon its shores. He had not proceeded far, when he came to the province of a warlike cacique, named Chiapes, who, issuing forth at the head of his warriors, looked with scorn upon the scanty number of straggling Spaniards, and forebade them to set foot within his territories.

* *Vidas de Españoles Célebres*, por Don Manuel Josef Quintana, tom. ii., p. 40.

Vasco Nuñez depended for safety upon his power of striking terror into the ignorant savages. Ordering his arquebusiers to the front, he poured a volley into the enemy, and then let loose the bloodhounds. The flash and noise of the fire-arms, and the sulphurous smoke which was carried by the wind among the Indians, overwhelmed them with dismay. Some fell down in a panic as though they had been struck by thunderbolts, the rest betook themselves to headlong flight.

Vasco Nuñez commanded his men to refrain from needless slaughter. He made many prisoners, and on arriving at the village, sent some of them in search of their cacique, accompanied by several of his Indian guides. The latter informed Chiapes of the supernatural power of the Spaniards, assuring him that they exterminated with thunder and lightning all who dared to oppose them, but loaded all such as submitted to them with benefits. They advised him, therefore to throw himself upon their mercy and seek their friendship.

The cacique listened to their advice, and came trembling to the Spaniards, bringing with him five hundred pounds' weight of wrought gold as a peace-offering, for he had already learnt the value they set upon that metal. Vasco Nuñez received him with great kindness, and

graciously accepted his gold, for which he gave him beads, hawks'-bells, and looking-glasses, making him in his own conceit the richest potentate on that side of the mountains.

Friendship being thus established between them, Vasco Nuñez remained at the village for a few days, sending back the guides who had accompanied him from Quaraquà, and ordering his people whom he had left at that place to rejoin him. In the meantime he sent out three scouting parties of twelve men each, under Francisco Pizarro, Juan de Ẹscaray, and Alonzo Martin de Bon Benito, to explore the surrounding country and discover the best route to the sea. Alonzo Martin was the most successful. After two days' journey he came to a beach where he found two large canoes lying high and dry, without any water being in sight. While the Spaniards were regarding these canoes, and wondering why they should be so far on land, the tide, which rises to a great height on that coast, came rapidly in and set them afloat; upon this Alonzo Martin stepped into one of them and called his companions to bear witness that he was the first European that embarked upon that sea; his example was followed by one Blas de Ẹtienza, who called them likewise to testify that he was the second.*

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i., lib. x., cap. 2.

We mention minute particulars of the kind as being characteristic of these extraordinary enterprises, and of the extraordinary people who undertook them. The humblest of these Spanish adventurers seemed actuated by a swelling and ambitious spirit, which rose superior at times to mere sordid considerations, and aspired to share the glory of these great discoveries. The scouting party having thus explored a direct route to the sea-coast, returned to report their success to their commander.

Vasco Nuñez, being rejoined by his men from Quaraquà, now left the greater part of his followers to repose and recover from their sickness and fatigues in the village of Chiapes; and, taking with him twenty-six Spaniards, well armed, he set out on the 29th of September, for the sea-coast, accompanied by the cacique and a number of his warriors. The thick forests which covered the mountains descended to the very margin of the sea, surrounding and overshadowing the wide and beautiful bays that penetrated far into the land. The whole coast as far as the eye could reach was perfectly wild, the sea without a sail, and both seemed never to have been under the dominion of civilized man.

Vasco Nuñez arrived on the borders of one of those bays, to which he gave the name of Saint Michael, it being discovered on that saint's

day. The tide was out, the water was above half a league distant, and the intervening beach was covered with mud; he seated himself, therefore, under the shade of the forest trees, until the tide should rise. After a while the water came rushing in with great impetuosity, and soon reached nearly to the place where the Spaniards were reposing. Upon this Vasco Nuñez rose and took a banner on which were painted the Virgin and Child, and under them the arms of Castile and Leon; then drawing his sword and throwing his buckler on his shoulder, he marched into the sea until the water reached above his knees, and waving his banner, exclaimed with a loud voice, "Long live the high and mighty monarchs, Don Ferdinand and Doña Juan, sovereigns of Castile, of Leon, and Arragon, in whose name, and for the royal Crown of Castile, I take real and corporal and actual possession of these seas and lands and coasts and ports and islands of the south, and all thereunto annexed; and of the kingdoms and provinces which do or may appertain to them in whatever manner or by whatever right or title, ancient or modern, in times past, present, or to come, without any contradiction; and if other prince or captain, Christian or infidel, or of any law, sect, or condition whatsoever, shall pretend any

right to these lands and seas, I am ready and prepared to maintain and defend them, in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, present and future, whose is the empire and dominion over these Indian islands, and Terra Firma, northern and southern, with all their seas, both at the arctic and antarctic poles, on either side of the equinoctial line, whether within or without the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, both now and in all times, as long as the world endures, and until the final day of judgment of all mankind."

This swelling declaration and defiance being uttered with a loud voice, and no one appearing to dispute his pretensions, Vasco Nuñez called upon his companions to bear witness of the fact of his having duly taken possession. They all declared themselves ready to defend his claim to the uttermost, as became true and loyal vassals to the Castilian sovereigns; and the notary having drawn up a document for the occasion, they subscribed it with their names.

This done they advanced to the margin of the sea, and stooping down tasted its waters. When they found that, though severed by intervening mountains and continents, they were salt like the seas of the north, they felt assured that they had indeed discovered an ocean, and again returned thanks to God.

Having concluded all these ceremonies, Vasco Nuñez drew a dagger from his girdle and cut a cross on a tree which grew within the water, and made two other crosses on two adjacent trees in honor of the Three Persons of the Trinity and in token of possession. His followers likewise cut crosses on many of the trees of the adjacent forest, and lopped off branches with their swords to bear away as trophies.*

Such was the singular medley of chivalrous and religious ceremonial with which these Spanish adventurers took possession of the vast Pacific Ocean and all its lands—a scene strongly characteristic of the nation and the age.

Chapter VII.

ADVENTURES OF VASCO NUÑEZ ON THE BORDERS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

[1513.]

WHILE he made the village of Chiapes his headquarters, Vasco Nuñez foraged the adjacent country and obtained considerable quantities of gold from the natives. Encouraged by his success he undertook to explore by sea

* Many of the foregoing particulars are from the unpublished volume of Oviedo's *History of the Indies.*

the borders of a neighboring gulf of great extent, which penetrated far into the land. The cacique Chiapes warned him of the danger of venturing to sea in the stormy season, which comprises the months of October, November, and December, assuring him that he had beheld many canoes swallowed up in the mighty waves and whirlpools, which at such time render the gulf almost unnavigable.

These remonstrances were unavailing. Vasco Nuñez expressed a confident belief that God would protect him, seeing that his voyage was to redound to the propagation of the Faith and the augmentation of the power of the Castilian monarchs over the infidels; and in truth this bigoted reliance on the immediate protection of Heaven seems to have been, in a great measure, the cause of the extravagant daring of the Spaniards in their expeditions in those days, whether against Moors or Indians.

Finding his representations of no effect, Chiapes volunteered to take part in this perilous cruise, lest he should appear wanting in courage or in good-will to his guest. Accompanied by the cacique therefore, Vasco Nuñez embarked on the 17th of October with sixty men in nine canoes managed by Indians, leaving the residue of his followers to recruit their health and strength in the village of Chiapes.

Scarcely however had they put forth on the broad bosom of the gulf when the wisdom of the cacique's advice was made apparent. The wind began to blow freshly, raising a heavy and tumultuous sea, which broke in roaring and foaming surges on the rocks and reefs and among the numerous islets with which the gulf was studded. The light canoes were deeply laden with men unskilled in their management. It was frightful to those in one canoe to behold their companions one instant tossed high on the breaking crest of a wave, the next plunging out of sight in a watery abyss. The Indians themselves, though almost amphibious in their habits, showed signs of consternation; for amidst these rocks and breakers even the skill of the expert swimmer would be of little avail. At length the Indians succeeded in tying the canoes in pairs, side by side, to prevent their being overturned, and in this way they kept afloat until towards evening they were enabled to reach a small island. Here they landed, and fastening the canoes to the rocks or to small trees that grew upon the shore, they sought an elevated dry place and stretched themselves to take repose. They had but escaped from one danger to encounter another. Having been for a long time accustomed to the sea on the northern side of the isthmus, where

there is little, if any, rise or fall of the tide, they had neglected to take any precaution against such an occurrence. In a little while they were awakened by the rapid rising of the water. They shifted their situation to a higher ground but the waters continued to gain upon them, the breakers rushing and roaring and foaming upon the beach, like so many monsters of the deep seeking for their prey. Nothing, it is said, can be more dismal and appalling than the sullen bellowing of the sea among the islands of that gulf at the rising and falling of the tide. By degrees rock after rock, and one sand-bank after another, disappeared, until the sea covered the whole island, and rose almost to the girdles of the Spaniards. Their situation was now agonizing. A little more and the waters would overwhelm them ; or, even as it was, the least surge might break over them and sweep them from their unsteady footing. Fortunately the wind had lulled, and the sea having risen above the rocks which had fretted it, became calm. The tide had reached its height and began to subside, and after a time they heard the retiring waves beating against the rocks below them.

When the day dawned they sought their canoes ; but here a sad spectacle met their eyes. Some were broken to pieces, others yawning

open in many parts. The clothing and food left in them had been washed away, and replaced by sand and water. The Spaniards gazed on the scene in mute despair. They were faint and weary, and needed food and repose, but famine and labor awaited them, even if they should escape with their lives. Vasco Nuñez, however, rallied their spirits, and set them an example by his own cheerful exertions. Obeying his directions, they set to work to repair, in the best manner they were able, the damages of the canoes. Such as were not too much shattered they bound and braced up with their girdles, with slips of the bark of trees, or with the tough long stalks of certain sea-weeds. They then peeled off the bark from the small sea-plants, pounded it between stones, and mixed it with grass, and with this endeavored to calk the seams and stop the leaks. When re-embarked, their numbers weighed down the canoes almost to the water's edge, and as they rose and sank with the swelling waves there was danger of their being swallowed up. All day they labored with the sea, suffering excessively from hunger and thirst, and at nightfall they landed in a corner of the gulf, near the abode of a cacique named Túmaco. Leaving a part of his men to guard the canoes, Vasco Nuñez set out with the residue for the Indian town. He ar-

rived there about midnight, but the inhabitants were on the alert to defend their habitations. The fire-arms and dogs soon put them to flight, and the Spaniards pursuing them with their swords, drove them howling into the woods. In the village were found provisions in abundance, beside a considerable amount of gold and a great quantity of pearls, many of them of a large size. In the house of the cacique were several huge shells of mother-of-pearl, and four pearl oysters, quite fresh, which showed that there was a pearl fishery in the neighborhood. Eager to learn the sources of this wealth, Vasco Nuñez sent several of the Indians of Chiapes in search of the cacique, who traced him to a wild retreat among the rocks. By their persuasions Túmaco sent his son, a fine young savage, as a mediator. The latter returned to his father loaded with presents, and extolling the benignity of these superhuman beings, who had shown themselves so terrible in battle. By these means, and by a mutual exchange of presents, a friendly intercourse was soon established. Among other things the cacique gave Vasco Nuñez jewels of gold weighing six hundred and fourteen crowns, and two hundred pearls of great size and beauty, excepting that they were somewhat discolored in consequence of the oysters having been opened by fire.

The cacique seeing the value which the Spaniards set upon the pearls, sent a number of his men to fish for them at a place about ten miles distant. Certain of the Indians were trained from their youth to this purpose, so as to become expert divers, and to acquire the power of remaining a long time beneath the water. The largest pearls are generally found in the deepest water, sometimes in three and four fathoms, and are only sought in calm weather; the smaller sort are found at the depth of two or three feet, and the oysters containing them are often driven in quantities on the beach during violent storms.

The party of pearl-divers sent by the cacique consisted of thirty Indians, with whom Vasco Nuñez sent six Spaniards as eye-witnesses. The sea however was so furious at that stormy season, that the divers dared not venture into the deep water. Such a number of the shell-fish however had been driven on shore, that they collected enough to yield pearls to the value of twelve marks of gold. They were small, but exceedingly beautiful, being newly taken and uninjured by fire. A number of these shell-fish, and their pearls, were selected to be sent to Spain as specimens.

In reply to the inquiries of Vasco Nuñez, the cacique informed him that the coast which he

The Sheep of Peru Carrying Burdens, Showing the Manner of Appealing to Them When Sullen

Redrawn from Herrera's "History of the West Indies"

saw stretching to the west continued onwards without end, and that far to the south there was a country abounding in gold, where the inhabitants made use of certain quadrupeds to carry burdens. He moulded a figure of clay to represent these animals, which some of the Spaniards supposed to be a deer, others a camel, others a tapir ; for as yet they knew nothing of the lama, the native beast of burden of South America. This was the second intimation received by Vasco Nuñez of the great empire of Peru ; and, while it confirmed all that had been told him by the son of Comagre, it awakened glowing anticipations of the glorious triumphs that awaited him.

Chapter XII.

FURTHER ADVENTURES AND EXPLOITS OF VASCO NUÑEZ ON THE BORDERS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

[1513.]

LEST any ceremonial should be wanting to secure his grand discovery to the Crown of Spain, Vasco Nuñez determined to sally from the gulf and take possession of the mainland beyond. The cacique Túmaco furnished him with a canoe of state, formed from the trunk of an enormous tree, and managed by a great num-

ber of Indians. The handles of the paddles were inlaid with small pearls, a circumstance which Vasco Nuñez caused his companions to testify before the notary, that it might be reported to the sovereigns as a proof of the wealth of this newly discovered sea.*

Departing in the canoe on the 29th of October, he was piloted cautiously by the Indians along the borders of the gulf, over drowned lands, where the sea was fringed by inundated forests, and as still as a pool. Arrived at a point of the gulf, Vasco Nuñez landed on a smooth sandy beach, laved by the waters of the broad ocean, and, with buckler on his arm, sword in hand, and banner displayed, again marched into the sea and took possession of it, with like ceremonials to those observed in the gulf of St. Michael.

The Indians now pointed to a line of land rising above the horizon about four or five leagues distant, which they described as being a great island, the principal one of the archipelago. The whole group abounded with pearls, but those taken on the coasts of this island were represented as being of immense size, many of them as large as a man's eye, and found in shell-fish as big as bucklers. This island and the surrounding cluster of small ones, they

* Oviedo, *Hist. Gen.*, p. 2, MS.

added, were under the domain of a tyrannical and puissant cacique, who often, during the calm seasons, made descents upon the mainland with fleets of canoes, plundering and desolating the coasts, and carrying the people into captivity.

Vasco Nuñez gazed with an eager and wistful eye at this land of riches, and would have immediately undertaken an expedition to it, had not the Indians represented the danger of venturing on such a voyage in that tempestuous season, in their frail canoes. His own recent experience convinced him of the wisdom of their remonstrances. He postponed his visit, therefore, to a future occasion, when, he assured his allies, he would avenge them upon this tyrant invader, and deliver their coasts from his maraudings. In the meantime he gave to this island the name of Isla Rica, and the little archipelago surrounding it the general appellation of the Pearl Islands.

On the 3d of November, he departed from the province of Túmaco, to visit other parts of the coasts. He embarked with his men in the canoes, accompanied by Chiapes and his Indians, and guided by the son of Túmaco, who had become strongly attached to the Spaniards. The young man piloted them along an arm of the sea, wide in some places, but in

others obstructed by groves of mangrove trees, which grew within the water, and interlaced their branches from shore to shore, so that at times the Spaniards were obliged to cut a passage with their swords.

At length they entered a great and turbulent river, which they ascended with difficulty, and early the next morning surprised a village on its banks, making prisoner the cacique Teaochan, who purchased their favor and kind treatment by a quantity of gold and pearls, and an abundant supply of provisions. As it was the intention of Vasco Nuñez to abandon the shores of the Southern ocean at this place, and to strike across the mountains for Darien, he took leave of Chiapes and of the youthful son of Túmaco, who were to return to their houses in the canoes. He sent at the same time, a message to his men, whom he had left in the village of Chiapes, appointing a place in the mountains where they were to rejoin him on his way back to Darien.

The talent of Vasco Nuñez for conciliating and winning the good-will of the savages is often mentioned, and to such a degree had he exerted it in the present instance, that the two chieftains shed tears at parting. Their conduct had a favorable effect upon the cacique Teaochan. He entertained Vasco Nuñez with

the most devoted hospitality during the three days that he remained in his village; when about to depart, he furnished him with a stock of provisions sufficient for several days, as his route would be over rocky and sterile mountains. He sent also a numerous band of his subjects to carry the burdens of the Spaniards. These he placed under the command of his son, whom he ordered never to separate from the strangers, nor to permit any of his men to return without the consent of Vasco Nuñez.

Chapter XIII.

VASCO NUÑEZ SETS OUT ON HIS RETURN ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS—HIS CONTESTS WITH THE SAVAGES.

TURNING their backs upon the Southern sea, the Spaniards now began painfully to clamber the rugged mountains on their return to Darien.

In the early part of their route an unlooked-for suffering awaited them: there was neither brook nor fountain nor standing pool. The burning heat, which produced intolerable thirst, had dried up all the mountain torrents, and they were tantalized by the sight of naked and dusty channels, where water had once flowed in abundance. Their suffering at length increased

to such a height, that many threw themselves, fevered and panting, upon the earth, and were ready to give up the ghost. The Indians however encouraged them to proceed, by hopes of speedy relief, and after a while, turning aside from the direct course, led them into a deep and narrow glen, refreshed and cooled by a fountain which bubbled out of a cleft of the rocks.

While refreshing themselves at the fountain, and reposing in the little valley, they learned from their guides that they were in the territories of a powerful chief named Poncra, famous for his riches. The Spaniards had already heard of the golden stores of this Crœsus of the mountains, and being now refreshed and invigorated, pressed forward with eagerness for his village. The cacique and most of his people fled at their approach, but they found an earnest of his wealth in the deserted houses, amounting in value to three thousand crowns in gold. Their avarice thus whetted, they despatched Indians in search of Poncra, who found him trembling in his secret retreat, and partly by threats, partly by promises, prevailed upon him and three of his principal subjects to come to Vasco Nuñez. He was a savage, it is said, so hateful of aspect, so misshapen in body and deformed in all his members, that he

was hideous to behold. The Spaniards endeavored by gentle means to draw from him information of the places where he procured his gold. He professed utter ignorance in the matter, declaring that the gold found in his village had been gathered by his predecessors in times long past, and that as he himself set no value on the metal, he had never troubled himself to seek it. The Spaniards resorted to menaces, and even, it is said, to tortures, to compel him to betray his reputed treasures, but with no better success. Disappointed in their expectations, and enraged at his supposed obstinacy, they listened too readily to charges advanced against him by certain caciques of the neighborhood, who represented him as a monster of cruelty, and as guilty of crimes repugnant to nature*; whereupon, in the heat of the moment, they gave him and his three companions, who were said to be equally guilty, to be torn in pieces by the dogs—a rash and cruel sentence, issued on the evidence of avowed enemies; and which, however it may be palliated by the alleged horror and disgust of the Spaniards at the imputed crimes of the cacique, bears visibly the stamp of haste and passion, and remains accordingly a foul blot on the character of Vasco Nuñez.

* Peter Martyr, decad. iii., cap. 2.

The Spaniards staid for thirty days reposing in the village of the unfortunate Poncra, during which time they were rejoined by their companions, who had been left behind at the village of Chiapes. They were accompanied by a cacique of the mountains, who had lodged and fed them, and made them presents of the value of two thousand crowns in gold. This hospitable savage approached Vasco Nuñez with a serene countenance, and taking him by the hand, "Behold," said he, "most valiant and powerful chief, I bring thee thy companions safe and well, as they entered under my roof. May he who made the thunder and lightning, and who gives us the fruits of the earth, preserve thee and thine in safety!" So saying, he raised his eyes to the sun, as if he worshipped that as his deity and the dispenser of all temporal blessings.*

Departing from this village, and being still accompanied by the Indians of Teaochan, the Spaniards now bent their course along the banks of the river Comagre, which descends the northern side of the isthmus, and flows through the territories of the cacique of the same name. This wild stream which in the course of ages had worn a channel through the deep clefts and ravines of the mountains, was

* Herrera, decad. i., lib. x., cap. 4.

bordered by precipices, or overhung by shagged forests; they soon abandoned it, therefore, and wandered on without any path, but guided by the Indians. They had to climb terrible precipices, and to descend into deep valleys, darkened by thick forests and beset with treacherous morasses, where, but for their guides, they might have been smothered in the mire.

In the course of this rugged journey they suffered excessively in consequence of their own avarice. They had been warned of the sterility of the country, and of the necessity of providing amply for the journey. When they came to load the Indians however who bore their burdens, their only thought was how to convey the most treasure; and they grudged even a slender supply of provisions, as taking up the place of an equal weight of gold. The consequences were soon felt. The Indians could carry but small burdens, and at the same time assisted to consume the scanty stock of food which formed part of their load. Scarcity and famine ensued, and relief was rarely to be procured, for the villages on this elevated part of the mountains were scattered and poor, and nearly destitute of provisions. They held no communication with each other; each contenting itself with the scanty produce of its own fields and forest. Some were entirely deserted;

at other places, the inhabitants, forced from their retreats, implored pardon, and declared they had hidden themselves through shame, not having the means of properly entertaining such celestial visitors. They brought peace-offerings of gold, but no provisions. For once the Spaniards found that even their darling gold could fail to cheer their drooping spirits. Their sufferings from hunger became intense, and many of their Indian companions sank down and perished by the way. At length they reached a village where they were enabled to obtain supplies, and where they remained thirty days, to recruit their wasted strength.

Chapter XIV.

ENTERPRISE AGAINST TUBANAMÀ, THE WARLIKE CACIQUE OF THE MOUNTAINS—RETURN TO DARIEN.

The Spaniards had now passed through the territories of Tubanamà, the most potent and warlike cacique of the mountains. This was the same chieftain of whom a formidable character had been given by the young Indian prince, who first informed Vasco Nuñez of the Southern sea. He had erroneously represented the dominions of Tubanamà as lying beyond the

mountains; and, while he dwelt upon the quantities of gold to be found in them, had magnified the dangers of any attempt to pass their borders. The name of this redoubtable cacique was in fact a terror throughout the country; and when Vasco Nuñez looked round upon his handful of pale and emaciated followers, he doubted whether even the superiority of their weapons, and their military skill, would enable them to cope with Tubanamà and his armies in open contest. He resolved, therefore, upon a perilous stratagem. When he made it known to his men, everyone pressed forward to engage in it. Choosing seventy of the most vigorous, he ordered the rest to maintain their post in the village.

As soon as night had fallen, he departed secretly with his chosen band, and made his way with such rapidity through the forests and defiles of the mountains, that he arrived in the neighborhood of the residence of Tubanamà by the following evening, though at the distance of two regular days' journey.

There waiting until midnight, he assailed the village suddenly, and captured the cacique and his whole family, in which were eighty females. Tubanamà lost all presence of mind, and wept bitterly. The Indian allies, beholding their once dreaded enemy thus fallen and

captive, urged that he should be put to death, accusing him of various crimes and cruelties. Vasco Nuñez pretended to listen to their prayers, and gave orders that his captive should be tied hand and foot and given to the dogs. The cacique approached him trembling, and laid his hand on the pommel of his sword. "Who can pretend," said he, "to strive with one who bears this weapon, which can cleave a man asunder with a blow? Ever since thy fame has reached among these mountains have I reverenced thy valor. Spare my life, and thou shalt have all the gold I can procure."

Vasco Nuñez, whose anger was assumed, was readily pacified. As soon as the day dawned, the cacique gave him armlets and other jewels of gold to the value of three thousand crowns, and sent messengers throughout his dominions ordering his subjects to aid in paying his ransom. The poor Indians, with their accustomed loyalty, hastened in crowds, bringing their golden ornaments, until in the course of three days they had produced an amount equal to six thousand crowns. This done, Vasco Nuñez set the cacique at liberty, bestowing on him several European trinkets, with which he considered himself richer than he had been with all his gold. Nothing would draw from him however the disclosure of the

mines whence this treasure was procured. He declared that it came from the territories of his neighbors, where gold and pearls were to be found in abundance; but that his lands produced nothing of the kind. Vasco Nuñez doubted his sincerity, and secretly caused the brooks and rivers in his dominions to be searched, where gold was found in such quantities that he determined at a future time to found two settlements in the neighborhood.

On parting with Tubanamà, the cacique sent his son with the Spaniards to learn their language and religion. It is said, also, that the Spaniards carried off eighty women; but of this particular fact, Oviedo, who writes with the papers of Vasco Nuñez before him, says nothing. He affirms, generally, however, that the Spaniards, throughout this expedition, were not scrupulous in their dealings with the wives and daughters of the Indians; and adds, that in this their commander set them the example.*

Having returned to the village where he had left the greater part of his men, Vasco Nuñez resumed his homeward march. His people were feeble and exhausted, and several of them sick; so that some had to be carried and others led by the arms. He himself was part of the

* Oviedo, *Hist. Gen.*, pt. ii., cap. 4, MS.

time afflicted by a fever, and had to be borne in a hammock on the shoulders of the Indians.

Proceeding thus slowly and toilfully, they at length arrived on the northern sea-coast, at the territories of their ally, Comagre. The old cacique was dead, and had been succeeded by his son, the same intelligent youth who had first given information of the Southern sea and the kingdom of Peru. The young chief, who had embraced Christianity, received them with great hospitality, making them presents of gold. Vasco Nuñez gave him trinkets in return, and a shirt and a soldier's cloak; with which, says Peter Martyr, he thought himself a god among his naked countrymen. After having reposed for a few days, Vasco Nuñez proceeded to Ponca, where he heard that a ship and caravel had arrived at Darien from Hispaniola, with reinforcements and supplies. Hastening, therefore, to Coyba, the territories of his ally Careta, he embarked on the 18th of January, 1514, with twenty of his men in the brigantine which he had left there, and arrived at Santa Maria de la Antigua, in the river of Darien, on the following day. All the inhabitants came forth to receive him; and when they heard the news of the great Southern sea, and of his returning from its shores laden with pearls and gold, there were no bounds to their

joy. He immediately despatched the ship and caravel to Coyba for the companions left behind, who brought with them the remaining booty, consisting of gold and pearls, mantles, hammocks, and other articles of cotton, and a great number of captives of both sexes. A fifth of the spoil was set apart for the Crown; the rest was shared, in just proportions, among those who had been in the expedition, and those who had remained at Darien. All were contented with their allotment, and elated with the prospect of still greater gain from future enterprises.

Thus ended one of the most remarkable expeditions of the early discoverers. The intrepidity of Vasco Nuñez in penetrating, with a handful of men, far into the interior of a wild and mountainous country, peopled by warlike tribes; his skill in managing his band of rough adventurers, stimulating their valor, enforcing their obedience, and attaching their affections, show him to have possessed great qualities as a general. We are told that he was always foremost in peril, and the last to quit the field. He shared the toils and dangers of the meanest of his followers, treating them with frank affability; watching, fighting, fasting, and laboring with them; visiting and consoling such as were sick or infirm, and dividing all his gains with

fairness and liberality. He was chargeable at times with acts of bloodshed and injustice, but it is probable that these were often called for as measures of safety and precaution ; he certainly offended less against humanity than most of the early discoverers; and the unbounded amity and confidence reposed in him by the natives, when they became intimately acquainted with his character, speak strongly in favor of his kind treatment of them.

The character of Vasco Nuñez had, in fact, risen with his circumstances, and now assumed a nobleness and grandeur from the discovery he had made, and the important charge it had devolved upon him. He no longer felt himself a mere soldier of fortune, at the head of a band of adventurers, but a great commander conducting an immortal enterprise. "Behold," says old Peter Martyr, "Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, at once transformed from a rash royster to a politic and discreet captain" : and thus it is that men are often made by their fortunes ; that is to say, their latent qualities are brought out, and shaped and strengthened by events, and by the necessity of every exertion to cope with the greatness of their destiny.

Chapter XV.

TRANSACTIONS IN SPAIN—PEDRARIAS DAVILA APPOINTED TO THE COMMAND OF DARIEN—TIDINGS RECEIVED IN SPAIN OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

VASCO NUÑEZ DE BALBOA now flattered himself that he had made a discovery calculated to silence all his enemies at court, and to elevate him to the highest favor with his sovereign. He wrote letters to the King, giving a detail of his expedition, and setting forth all that he had seen or heard of this Southern sea, and of the rich countries upon its borders. Besides the royal fifths of the profits of the expedition, he prepared a present for the sovereign, in the name of himself and his companions, consisting of the largest and most precious pearls they had collected. As a trusty and intelligent envoy to bear these tidings, he choose Pedro de Arbolancha, an old and tried friend, who had accompanied him in his toils and dangers, and was well acquainted with all his transactions.

The fate of Vasco Nuñez furnishes a striking instance how prosperity and adversity, how even life and death, hang balanced upon a point of time, and are affected by the improvement or neglect of moments. Unfortunately the

ship which was to convey the messenger to Spain lingered in port until the beginning of March; a delay which had a fatal influence on the fortunes of Vasco Nuñez. It is necessary here to cast an eye back upon the events which had taken place in Spain while he was employed in his conquests and discoveries.

The Bachelor Enciso had arrived in Castile full of his wrongs and indignities. He had friends at court who aided him in gaining a ready hearing, and he lost not a moment in availing himself of it. He declaimed eloquently upon the alleged usurpation of Vasco Nuñez, and represented him as governing the colony by force and fraud. It was in vain that the Alcalde Zamudio, the ancient colleague and the envoy of Vasco Nuñez, attempted to speak in his defence; he was unable to cope with the facts and arguments of the Bachelor, who was a pleader by profession, and now pleaded his own cause. The King determined to send a new governor to Darien, with power to inquire into and remedy all abuses. For this office he chose Don Pedro Arias Davila, commonly called Pedrarias.* He was a native of Segovia, who had been brought up in the royal household, and had distinguished himself as a brave sol-

* By the English historians he has generally been called Davila.

Natives of New Spain Preparing Food

Redrawn from Gottfriedt's "Newe Welt"

dier, both in the war of Granada and at the taking of Oran and Bugia in Africa. He possessed those personal accomplishments which captivate the soldiery, and was called *el Galán*, for his gallant array and courtly demeanor, and *el Justador*, or the Tilter, for his dexterity in jousts and tournaments. These, it must be admitted, were not the qualifications most adapted for the government of rude and factious colonies in a wilderness; but he had an all-powerful friend in the Bishop Fonseca. The Bishop was as thorough-going in patronage as in persecution. He assured the King that Pedrarias had understanding equal to his valor; that he was as capable of managing the affairs of peace as of war, and that, having been brought up in the royal household, his loyalty might be implicitly relied on.

Scarcely had Don Pedrarias been appointed when Cayzedo and Colmenares arrived on their mission from Darien to communicate the intelligence received from the son of the cacique Comagre, of the Southern sea beyond the mountains, and to ask one thousand men to enable Vasco Nuñez to make the discovery.

The avarice and ambition of Ferdinand were inflamed by the tidings. He rewarded the bearers of the intelligence, and after consulting

with Bishop Fonseca resolved to despatch immediately a powerful *armada* with twelve hundred men under the command of Pedrarias, to accomplish the enterprise.

Just about this time the famous Gonsalvo Hernandez de Cordova, commonly called the Great Captain, was preparing to return to Naples, where the allies of Spain had experienced a signal defeat, and had craved the assistance of this renowned general to retrieve their fortunes. The chivalry of Spain thronged to enlist under the banner of Gonsalvo. The Spanish nobles, with their accustomed prodigality, sold or mortgaged their estates to buy gorgeous armor, silks, brocades, and other articles of martial pomp and luxury, that they might figure with becoming magnificence in the campaigns of Italy. The armament was on the point of sailing for Naples with this host of proud and gallant spirits, when the jealous mind of Ferdinand took offence at the enthusiasm thus shown towards his general, and he abruptly countermanded the expedition. The Spanish cavaliers were overwhelmed with disappointment at having their dreams of glory thus suddenly dispelled ; when, as if to console them, the enterprise of Pedrarias was set on foot, and opened a different career of adventure. The very idea of an unknown sea and splendid

empire, where never European ship had sailed nor foot had trodden, broke upon the imagination with the vague wonders of an Arabian tale. Even the countries already known, in the vicinity of the settlement of Darien, were described in the usual terms of exaggeration. Gold was said to lie on the surface of the ground, or to be gathered with nets out of the brooks and rivers; insomuch that the region hitherto called Terra Firma, now received the pompous and delusive appellation of Castilla del Oro, or Golden Castile.

Excited by these reports, many of the youthful cavaliers who had prepared for the Italian campaign now offered themselves as volunteers to Don Pedrarias. He accepted their services and appointed Seville as the place of assemblage. The streets of that ancient city soon swarmed with young and noble cavaliers, splendidly arrayed, full of spirits, eager for the sailing of the Indian *armada*. Pedrarias on his arrival at Seville made a general review of his forces, and was embarrassed to find that the number amounted to three thousand. He had been limited in his first armament to twelve hundred; on representing the nature of the case, however, the number was extended to fifteen hundred; but through influence, entreaty, and stratagem, upwards of two thousand event-

ually embarked.* Happy did he think himself who could in any manner and by any means get admitted on board of the squadron. Nor was this eagerness for the enterprise confined merely to young and buoyant and ambitious adventurers; we are told that there were many covetous old men who offered to go at their own expense, without seeking any pay from the King. Thus every eye was turned with desire to this squadron of modern argonauts, as it lay anchored on the bosom of the Guadalquiver.

The pay and appointments of Don Pedrarias Davila were on the most liberal scale, and no expense was spared in fitting out the armament; for the objects of the expedition were both colonization and conquest. Artillery and powder were procured from Malaga. Besides the usual weapons, such as muskets, crossbows, swords, pikes, lances, and Neapolitan targets, there was armor devised of quilted cotton, as being light and better adapted to the climate, and sufficiently proof against the weapons of the Indians; and wooden bucklers from the Canary Islands, to ward off the poisoned arrows of the Caribs.

Santa Maria de la Antigua was, by royal ordinance, elevated into the metropolitan city of Golden Castile, and a Franciscan friar, named Juan de Quevedo, was appointed as bishop,

* Oviedo, lib. ii., cap. 7, MS.

with powers to decide in all cases of conscience. A number of friars were nominated to accompany him, and he was provided with the necessary furniture and vessels for a chapel.

Among the various regulations made for the good of the infant colony, it was ordained that no lawyers should be admitted there, it having been found at Hispaniola and elsewhere that they were detrimental to the welfare of the settlements by fomenting disputes and litigations. The judicial affairs were to be entirely confided to the licentiate Gaspar de Espinosa, who was to officiate as alcalde mayor or chief judge.

Don Pedrarias had intended to leave his wife in Spain. Her name was Doña Isabel de Bobadilla; she was niece to the Marchioness de Moya, a great favorite of the late Queen Isabella, who had been instrumental in persuading her royal mistress to patronize Columbus.* Her niece partook of her high and generous nature. She refused to remain behind in selfish security, but declared that she would accompany her husband in every peril, whether by sea or land. This

* This was the same Marchioness de Moya, who, during the war of Granada, while the court and royal army were encamped before Malaga, was mistaken for the Queen by a Moorish fanatic, and had nearly fallen beneath his dagger.

self-devotion is the more remarkable, when it is considered that she was past the romantic period of youth ; and that she left behind her in Spain, a family of four sons and four daughters.

Don Pedrarias was instructed to use great indulgence towards the people of Darien, who had been the followers of Nicuesa, and to remit the royal tithe of all the gold they might have collected previous to his arrival. Towards Vasco Nuñez de Balboa alone the royal countenance was stern and severe. Pedrarias was to depose him from his assumed authority, and to call him to strict account before the alcalde mayor, Gaspar de Espinosa, for his treatment of the Bachelor Enciso.

The splendid fleet, consisting of fifteen sail, weighed anchor at St. Lucar on the 12th of April, 1514, and swept proudly out of the Guadalquiver, thronged with chivalrous adventurers for Golden Castile. But a short time had elapsed after its departure, when Pedro Arbolancho arrived with the tardy mission of Vasco Nuñez. Had he arrived a few days sooner, how different might have been the fortune of his friend !

He was immediately admitted to the royal presence, where he announced the adventurous and successful expedition of Vasco Nuñez, and laid before the King the pearls and golden ornaments brought as the first fruits of the discovery.

King Ferdinand listened with charmed attention to this tale of unknown seas and wealthy realms added to his empire. It filled, in fact, the imagination of the most sage and learned with golden dreams, and anticipations of unbounded riches. Old Peter Martyr, who received letters from his friends in Darien, and communicated by word of mouth with those who came from thence, writes to Leo X. in exulting terms of this event.

"Spain," says he, "will hereafter be able to satisfy with pearls the greedy appetite of such as in wanton pleasures are like unto Cleopatra and Æsopus; so that henceforth we shall neither envy nor reverence the nice fruitfulness of Trapoban or the Red Sea. The Spaniards will not need hereafter to mine and dig far into the earth, nor to cut asunder mountains in quest of gold, but will find it plentifully, in a manner, on the upper crust of the earth, or in the sands of rivers dried up by the heats of summer. Certainly the reverend antiquity obtained not so great a benefit of nature, nor even aspired to the knowledge thereof, since never man before, from the unknown world, penetrated to these unknown regions." *

The tidings of this discovery made all Spain resound with the praises of Vasco Nuñez; and, from being considered a lawless and desperate adventurer, he was lauded to the skies as a

* P. Martyr, decad. iii., chap. iii. Lok's translation.

worthy successor to Columbus. The King repented of the harshness of his late measures towards him, and ordered the Bishop Fonseca to devise some mode of rewarding his transcendent services.

Chapter XVII.

ARRIVAL AND GRAND ENTRY OF DON PEDRARIAS DAVILA INTO DARIEN.

WHILE honors and rewards were preparing in Europe for Vasco Nuñez, that indefatigable commander, inspired by his fortunes with redoubled zeal and loftier ambition, was exercising the paternal forethought and discretion of a patriotic governor over the country subjected to his rule. His most strenuous exertions were directed to bring the neighborhood of Darien into such a state of cultivation, as might render the settlement independent of Europe for supplies. The town was situated on the banks of a river, and contained upwards of two hundred houses and cabins. Its population amounted to five hundred and fifteen Europeans, all men, and fifteen hundred Indians, male and female. Orchards and gardens had been laid out, where European as well as native fruits and vegetables were cultivated, and already gave promise of future abundance. Vasco Nuñez devised all

kinds of means to keep up the spirits of his people. On holidays they had their favorite national sports and games, and particularly tilting matches, of which chivalrous amusement the Spaniards in those days were extravagantly fond. Sometimes he gratified their restless and roving habits by sending them on expeditions to various parts of the country, to acquire a knowledge of its resources, and to strengthen his sway over the natives. He was so successful in securing the amity, or exciting the awe of the Indian tribes, that a Spaniard might go singly about the land in perfect safety; while his own followers were zealous in their devotion to him, both from admiration of his past exploits and from hopes of soon being led by him to new discoveries and conquests. Peter Martyr, in his letter to Leo X., speaks in high terms of these "old soldiers of Darien," the remnants of those well-tried adventurers who had followed the fortunes of Ojeda, Nicuesa, and Vasco Nuñez.

"They were hardened," says he, "to abide all sorrows, and were exceedingly tolerant of labor, heat, hunger and watching, insomuch that they merrily make their boast that they have observed a longer Lent than even your holiness enjoined, since, for the space of four years, their food has been herbs and fruits, with now and then fish, and very seldom flesh." *

* P. Martyr, decad. 3, cap. iii. Lok's translation.

Such were the hard and well-seasoned veterans that were under the sway of Vasco Nuñez; and the colony gave signs of rising in prosperity under his active and fostering management when, in the month of June, the fleet of Don Pedrarias Davila arrived in the gulf of Uraba.

The Spanish cavaliers who accompanied the new governor were eager to get on shore, and to behold the anticipated wonders of the land; but Pedrarias, knowing the resolute character of Vasco Nuñez, and the devotion of his followers, apprehended some difficulty in getting possession of the colony. Anchoring, therefore, about a league and a half from the settlement, he sent a messenger on shore to announce his arrival. The envoy, having heard much in Spain of the prowess and exploits of Vasco Nuñez, and the riches of Golden Castile, expected no doubt to find a blustering warrior, maintaining barbaric state in the government which he had usurped. Great was his astonishment, therefore, to find this redoubtable hero a plain unassuming man, clad in a cotton frock and drawers, and hempen sandals, directing and aiding the labor of several Indians who were thatching a cottage in which he resided.

The messenger approached him respectfully, and announced the arrival of Don Pedrarias Davila as Governor of the country.

Whatever Vasco Nuñez may have felt at this intelligence, he suppressed his emotions, and answered the messenger with great discretion. "Tell Don Pedrarias Davila," said he, "that he is welcome, and I congratulate him on his safe arrival, and am ready with all that are here to obey his orders."

The little community of rough and daring adventurers was in an uproar when they found a new governor had arrived. Some of the most zealous adherents of Vasco Nuñez were disposed to sally forth, sword in hand, and repel the intruder; but they were restrained by their more considerate chieftain, who prepared to receive the new governor with all due submission.

Pedrarias disembarked on the 30th of June, accompanied by his heroic wife Doña Isabella, who, according to old Peter Martyr, had sustained the roarings and rages of the ocean with no less stout courage than either her husband or the mariners who had been brought up among the surges of the sea.

Pedrarias set out for the embryo city at the head of two thousand men, all well armed. He led his wife by the hand, and on the other side of him was the Bishop of Darien, in his robes; while a brilliant train of youthful cavaliers, in glittering armor and brocade, formed a kind of body-guard.

All this pomp and splendor formed a striking contrast with the humble state of Vasco Nuñez, who came forth unarmed, in simple attire, accompanied by his counsellors and a handful of the "old soldiers of Darien," scarred and battered, and grown half wild in Indian warfare, but without weapons, and in garments much the worse for wear.

Vasco Nuñez saluted Don Pedrarias Davila, with profound reverence, and promised him implicit obedience, both in his own name and in the name of the community. Having entered the town, he conducted his distinguished guests to his straw-thatched habitation, where he had caused a repast to be prepared of such cheer as his means afforded, consisting of roots and fruits, maize and cassava bread, with no other beverage than water from the river;—a sorry palace and a meagre banquet in the eyes of the gay cavaliers, who had anticipated far other things from the usurper of Golden Castile. Vasco Nuñez, however, acquitted himself in his humble wigwam with the courtesy and hospitality of a prince, and showed that the dignity of an entertainment depends more upon the giver than the feast. In the meantime a plentiful supply of European provisions was landed from the fleet, and a temporary abundance was diffused through the colony.

Chapter XVII.

PERFIDIOUS CONDUCT OF DON PEDRARIAS TOWARDS VASCO NUÑEZ.

On the day after his entrance into Darien, Don Pedrarias held a private conference with Vasco Nuñez in presence of the historian Oviedo, who had come out from Spain as public notary of the colony. The Governor commenced by assuring him that he was instructed by the King to treat him with great favor and distinction, to consult him about the affairs of the colony, and to apply to him for information relative to the surrounding country. At the same time he professed the most amicable feelings on his own part, and an intention to be guided by his counsels in all public measures.

Vasco Nuñez was of a frank, confiding nature, and was so captivated by this unexpected courtesy and kindness, that he threw off all caution and reserve, and opened his whole soul to the politic courtier. Pedrarias availed himself of this communicative mood to draw from him a minute and able statement in writing, detailing the circumstances of the colony, and the information collected respecting various parts of the country; the route by which he had traversed the mountains; his discovery of the South Sea; the situation and reputed

wealth of the Pearl Islands; the rivers and ravines most productive of gold; together with the names and territories of the various caciques with whom he had made treaties.

When Pedrarias had thus beguiled the unsuspecting soldier of all the information necessary for his purposes, he dropped the mask, and within a few days proclaimed a judicial scrutiny into the conduct of Vasco Nuñez and his officers. It was to be conducted by the licentiate Gaspar de Espinosa, who had come as alcalde mayor, or chief judge. The licentiate was an inexperienced lawyer, having but recently left the university of Salamanca. He appears to have been somewhat flexible in his opinions, and prone to be guided or governed by others. At the outset of his career he was much under the influence of Quevedo, the Bishop of Darien. Now, as Vasco Nuñez knew the importance of this prelate in the colony, he had taken care to secure him to his interests by paying him the most profound deference and respect, and by giving him a share in his agricultural enterprises and his schemes of traffic. In fact the good Bishop looked upon him as one eminently calculated to promote his temporal prosperity, to which he was by no means insensible. Under the influence of the prelate, therefore, the alcalde commenced his

investigation in the most favorable manner. He went largely into an examination of the discoveries of Vasco Nuñez, and of the nature and extent of his various services. The Governor was alarmed at the course which the inquiry was taking. If thus conducted, it would but serve to illustrate the merits and elevate the reputation of the man whom it was his interest and intent to ruin. To counteract it, he immediately set on foot a secret and invidious course of interrogatories of the followers of Nicuesa and Ojeda, to draw from them testimony which might support the charge against Vasco Nuñez of usurpation and tyrannical abuse of power. The Bishop and the alcalde received information of the inquisition, carried on thus secretly, and without their sanction. They remonstrated warmly against it, as an infringement of their rights, being coadjutors in the government; and they spurned the testimony of the followers of Ojeda and Nicuesa, as dictated and discolored by ancient enmity. Vasco Nuñez was therefore acquitted by them of the criminal charges made against him, though he remained involved in difficulties from the suits brought against him by individuals, for losses and damages occasioned by his measures.

Pedrarias was incensed at this acquittal, and

insisted upon the guilt of Vasco Nuñez, which he pretended to have established to his conviction by his secret investigations; and he even determined to send him in chains to Spain, to be tried for the death of Nicuesa and for other imputed offences.

It was not the inclination or the interest of the Bishop that Vasco Nuñez should leave the colony; he therefore managed to awaken the jealous apprehensions of the Governor as to the effect of his proposed measure. He intimated that the arrival of Vasco Nuñez in Spain would be signalized by triumph rather than disgrace. By that time his grand discoveries would be blazoned to the world, and would atone for all his faults. He would be received with enthusiasm by the nation, with favor by the King, and would be probably sent back to the colony clothed with new dignity and power.

Pedrarias was placed in a perplexing dilemma by these suggestions. His violent proceedings against Vasco Nuñez were also in some measure restrained by the influence of his wife, Doña Isabel de Bobadilla, who felt a great respect and sympathy for the discoverer. In his perplexity, the wily Governor adopted a middle course. He resolved to detain Vasco Nuñez at Darien under a cloud of imputation, which would gradually impair his popularity;

while his patience and means would be silently consumed by protracted and expensive litigation. In the meantime, however, the property which had been sequestrated was restored to him.

While Pedrarias treated Vasco Nuñez with this severity, he failed not to avail himself of the plans of that able commander. The first of these was to establish a line of posts across the mountains between Darien and the South Sea. It was his eager desire to execute this before any order should arrive from the King in favor of his predecessor, in order that he might have the credit of having colonized the coast, and Vasco Nuñez, merely that of having discovered and visited it.* Before he could complete these arrangements, however, unlooked-for calamities fell upon the settlement, that for a time interrupted every project, and made every one turn his thoughts merely to his own security.

Chapter XVIII.

CALAMITIES OF THE SPANISH CAVALIERS AT DARIEN.

THE town of Darien was situated in a deep valley, surrounded by lofty hills, which, while they kept off the breezes so grateful in a sultry

* Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 2, cap. 8.

climate, reflected and concentrated the rays of the sun, insomuch, that at noontide the heat was insupportable; the river which passed it was shallow, with a muddy channel and bordered by marshes; overhanging forests added to the general humidity; and the very soil on which the town was built was of such a nature, that on digging to the depth of a foot there would ooze forth brackish water.*

It was not matter of surprise that a situation of this kind, in a tropical climate, should be fatal to the health of Europeans. Many who had recently arrived were swept off speedily; Pedrarias himself fell sick, and was removed, with most of his people to a healthier spot on the river Corobari. The malady, however, continued to increase. The provisions brought out in the ships had been partly damaged by the sea, the residue grew scanty, and the people were put on short allowance. The debility thus produced increased the ravages of disease; at length the provisions were exhausted, and the horrors of absolute famine ensued.

Every one was more or less affected by these calamities; even the veterans of the colony quailed beneath them; but to none were they more fatal than to the crowd of young cavaliers who had once glittered so gayly about the

* Peter Martyr, decad. iii., cap. 6.

streets of Seville, and had come out to the New World elated with the most sanguine expectations. From the very moment of their landing, they had been disheartened at the savage scenes around them, and disgusted with the squalid life they were doomed to lead. They shrunk with disdain from the labors with which alone wealth was to be procured in this land of gold and pearls, and were impatient of the humble exertions necessary for the maintenance of existence. As the famine increased, their case became desperate; for they were unable to help themselves, and their rank and dignity commanded neither deference nor aid at a time when common misery made every one selfish. Many of them, who had mortgaged estates in Spain to fit themselves out sumptuously for their Italian campaign, now perished for lack of food. Some would be seen bartering a robe of crimson silk, or some garment of rich brocade, for a pound of Indian bread or European biscuit; others sought to satisfy the cravings of hunger with the herbs and roots of the field, and one of the principal cavaliers absolutely expired of hunger in the public streets.

In this wretched way, and in the short space of one month, perished seven hundred of the little army of youthful and buoyant spirits who

had embarked with Pedrarias. The bodies of some remained for a day or two without sepulture, their friends not having sufficient strength to bury them. Unable to remedy the evil, Pedrarias gave permission to his men to flee from it. A shipload of starving adventurers departed for Cuba, where some of them joined the standard of Diego Velasquez, who was colonizing that island; others made their way back to Spain, where they arrived broken in health, in spirits, and in fortune.

Chapter XIX.

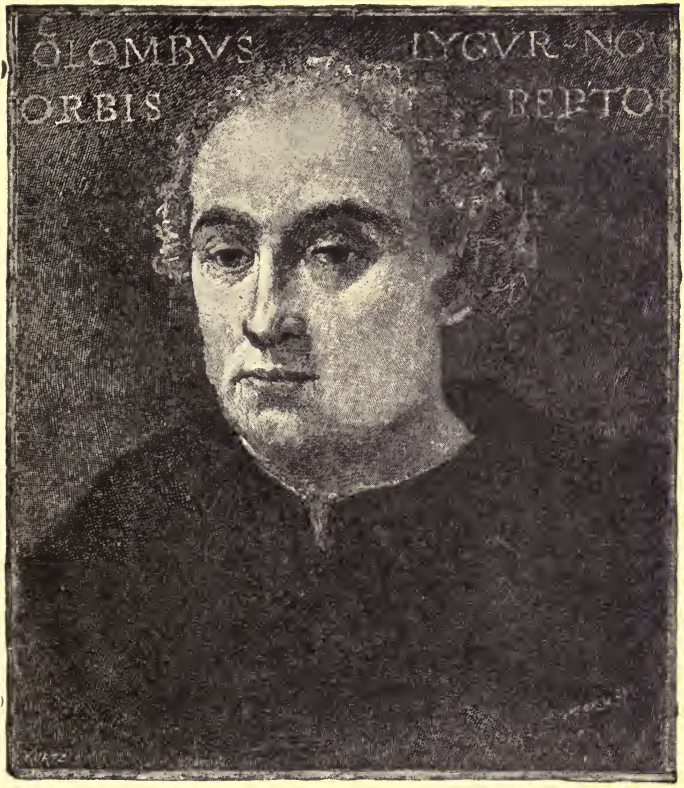
FRUITLESS EXPEDITION OF PEDRARIAS.

THE departure of so many hungry mouths was some temporary relief to the colony; and Pedrarias, having recovered from his malady, bestirred himself to send expeditions in various directions, for the purpose of foraging the country and collecting treasures.

These expeditions however were intrusted to his own favorites and partisans; while Vasco Nuñez, the man most competent to carry them into effect, remained idle and neglected. A judicial inquiry, tardily carried on, overshadowed him, and though it substantiated nothing served to embarrass his actions, to cool his

Portrait of Christopher Columbus

From the painting owned by Dr. Di Orchi, of Como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friends, and to give him the air of a public delinquent. Indeed, to the other evils of the colony was now added that of excessive litigation, arising out of the disputes concerning the government of Vasco Nuñez, and which increased to such a degree that according to the report of the alcalde, Espinosa, if the lawsuits should be divided among the people, at least forty would fall to each man's share.* This too was in a colony into which the government had commanded that no lawyer should be admitted!

Wearied and irritated by the check given to his favorite enterprises, and confident of the ultimate approbation of the King, Vasco Nuñez determined to take his fortunes in his own hands, and to prosecute in secret his grand project of exploring the regions beyond the mountains. For this purpose, he privately despatched one Andres Garabito to Cuba to enlist men, and make provisions for an expedition across the isthmus, from Nombre de Dios, and for founding a colony on the shores of the Southern ocean; whence he proposed to extend his discoveries by sea and land.

While Vasco Nuñez awaited the return of Garabito, he had the mortification of beholding various of his colonizing plans pursued and

* Herrera, decad. ii., lib. i., cap. 1.

marred by Pedrarias. Among other enterprises, the Governor despatched his lieutenant-general, Juan de Ayora, at the head of four hundred men, to visit the provinces of those caciques with whom Vasco Nuñez had sojourned and made treaties on his expedition to the Southern Sea. Ayora partook of the rash and domineering spirit of Pedrarias, and harassed and devastated the countries which he pretended to explore. He was received with amity and confidence by various caciques who had formed treaties with Vasco Nuñez; but he repaid their hospitality with the basest ingratitude, seizing upon their property, taking from them their wives and daughters, and often torturing them to make them reveal their hidden or supposed treasures. Among those treated with this perfidy, we grieve to enumerate the youthful cacique who first gave Vasco Nuñez information of the sea beyond the mountains.

The enormities of Ayora, and of other captains of Pedrarias, produced the usual effect; the natives were roused to desperate resistance; caciques, who had been faithful friends, were converted into furious enemies, and the expedition ended in disappointment and disaster.

The adherents of Vasco Nuñez did not fail to contrast these disastrous enterprises with those which had been conducted with so much

glory and advantage by their favorite commander; and their sneers and reproaches had such an effect upon the jealous and irritable disposition of Pedrarias, that he determined to employ their idol in a service likely to be attended with defeat, and to impair his popularity. None seemed more fitting for the purpose than an expedition to Dobayba, where he had once already attempted in vain to penetrate, and where so many of his followers had fallen victims to the stratagems and assaults of the natives.

Chapter XX.

SECOND EXPEDITION OF VASCO NUÑEZ IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN TEMPLE OF DOBAYBA.

THE rich mines of Dobayba, and the treasures of its golden temple, had continued a favorite theme with the Spanish adventurers. It was ascertained that Vasco Nuñez had stopped short of the wealthy region on his former expedition, and had mistaken a frontier village for the residence of the cacique. The enterprise of the temple was therefore still to be achieved; and it was solicited by several of the cavaliers in the train of Pedrarias, with all the chivalrous ardor of that romantic age. In-

deed, common report had invested the enterprise with difficulties and dangers sufficient to stimulate the ambition of the keenest seeker of adventure. The savages who inhabited that part of the country were courageous and adroit. They fought by water as well as by land, forming ambuscades with their canoes in the bays and rivers. The country was intersected by dreary fens and morasses, infested by all kinds of reptiles. Clouds of gnats and mosquitos filled the air; there were large bats also, supposed to have the baneful properties of the vampire; alligators lurked in the waters, and the gloomy recesses of the fens were said to be the dens of dragons! *

Besides these objects of terror, both true and fabulous, the old historian Peter Martyr makes mention of another monstrous animal said to infest this golden region, and which deserves to be cited, as showing the imaginary dangers with which the active minds of the discoverers peopled the unexplored wilderness around them.

According to the tales of the Indians, there had occurred shortly before the arrival of the Spaniards a violent tempest, or rather hurricane, in the neighborhood of Dobayba, which demolished houses, tore up trees by the roots,

* P. Martyr.

and laid waste whole forests. When the tempest had subsided and the affrighted inhabitants ventured to look abroad, they found that two monstrous animals had been brought into the country by the hurricane. According to their accounts they were not unlike the ancient harpies, and one being smaller than the other was supposed to be its young. They had the faces of women, with the claws and wings of eagles, and were of such prodigious size that the very boughs of the trees on which they alighted broke beneath them. They would swoop down and carry off a man as a hawk would bear off a chicken, flying with him to the tops of the mountains, where they would tear him in pieces and devour him. For some time they were the scourge and terror of the land until the Indians succeeded in killing the old one by stratagem, and, hanging her on their long spears, bore her through all the towns to assuage the alarm of the inhabitants. The younger harpy, says the Indian tradition, was never seen afterwards.*

Such were some of the perils, true and fabulous, with which the land of Dobayba was said to abound; and in fact the very Indians had such a dread of its dark and dismal morasses, that in their journeyings they carefully avoided

* P. Martyr, decad. vii., cap. 10.

them, preferring the circuitous and rugged paths of the mountains.

Several of the young cavaliers, as has been observed, were stimulated rather than deterred by these dangers, and contended for the honor of the expedition; but Pedrarias selected his rival for the task, hoping, as has been hinted, that it would involve him in disgrace. Vasco Nuñez promptly accepted the enterprise, for his pride was concerned in its success. Two hundred resolute men were given to him for the purpose; but his satisfaction was diminished when he found that Luis Carillo, an officer of Pedrarias who had failed in a perilous enterprise, was associated with him in the command.

Few particulars remain to us of the events of this affair. They embarked in a fleet of canoes, and traversing the gulf arrived at the river which flowed down from the region of Dobayba. They were not destined, however, to achieve the enterprise of the golden temple. As they were proceeding rather confidently and unguardedly up the river they were surprised and surrounded by a swarm of canoes, filled with armed savages, which darted out from lurking places along the shores. Some of the Indians assailed them with lances, others with clouds of arrows, while some, plunging into

the water, endeavored to overturn their canoes. In this way one half of the Spaniards were killed or drowned. Among the number fell Luis Carillo, pierced through the breast by an Indian lance. Vasco Nuñez himself was wounded, and had great difficulty in escaping to the shore with the residue of his forces.

The Indians pursued him and kept up a skirmishing attack, but he beat them off until the night, when he silently abandoned the shore of the river and directed his retreat towards Darien. It is easier to imagine than to describe the toils and dangers and horrors which beset him and the remnant of his men as they traversed rugged mountains or struggled through the fearful morasses of which they had heard such terrific tales. At length they succeeded in reaching the settlement of Darien.

The partisans of Pedrarias exulted in seeing Vasco Nuñez return thus foiled and wounded, and taunted his adherents with their previous boastings. The latter, however, laid all the blame upon the unfortunate Carillo. "Vasco Nuñez," said they, "had always absolute command in his former enterprises, but in this he has been embarrassed by an associate. Had the expedition been confided to him alone, the event had been far different."

Chapter XXII.

LETTERS FROM THE KING IN FAVOR OF VASCO NUÑEZ—ARRIVAL OF GARABITO—ARREST OF VASCO NUÑEZ.

[1515.]

About this time despatches arrived which promised to give a new turn to the fortunes of Vasco Nuñez and to the general affairs of the colony. They were written after the tidings of the discovery of the South Sea and the subjugation of so many important provinces of the isthmus. In a letter addressed to Vasco Nuñez the King expressed his high sense of his merits and services, and constituted him Adelantado of the South Sea and Governor of the provinces of Panama and Coyba, though subordinate to the general command of Pedrarias. A letter was likewise written by the King to Pedrarias informing him of this appointment and ordering him to consult Vasco Nuñez on all public affairs of importance. This was a humiliating blow to the pride and consequence of Pedrarias, but he hoped to parry it. In the meantime, as all letters from Spain were first delivered into his hands, he withheld that intended for Vasco Nuñez until he should determine what course of conduct to adopt. The latter, however, heard of the circumstance, as did his friend the

Bishop of Darien. The prelate made loud complaints of this interruption of the royal correspondence, which he denounced even from the pulpit as an outrage upon the rights of the subject, and an act of disobedience to the sovereign.

Upon this the Governor called a council of his public officers, and after imparting the contents of his letter requested their opinion as to the propriety of investing Vasco Nuñez with the dignities thus granted to him. The alcalde mayor, Espinosa, had left the party of the Bishop and was now devoted to the Governor. He insisted vehemently that the offices ought in no wise to be given to Vasco Nuñez until the King should be informed of the result of the inquest still going on against him. In this he was warmly supported by the treasurer and the accountant. The Bishop replied indignantly that it was presumptuous and disloyal in them to dispute the commands of the King, and to interfere with the rewards conscientiously given by him to a meritorious subject. In this way, he added, they were defeating by their passions the grateful intentions of their sovereigns. The Governor was overawed by the honest warmth of the Bishop and professed to accord with him in opinion. The council lasted until midnight, and it was finally agreed that

the titles and dignities should be conferred on Vasco Nuñez on the following day.*

Pedrarias and his officers reflected, however, that if the jurisdiction implied by these titles were absolutely vested in Vasco Nuñez, the government of Darien and Castilla del Oro would virtually be reduced to a trifling matter. They resolved, therefore, to adopt a middle course: to grant him the empty titles, but to make him give security not to enter upon the actual government of the territories in question, until Pedrarias should give him permission. The Bishop and Vasco Nuñez assented to this arrangement, —satisfied, for the present, with securing the titles, and trusting to the course of events to get dominion over the territories.†

The new honors of Vasco Nuñez were now promulgated to the world, and he was everywhere addressed by the title of Adelantado. His old friends lifted up their heads with exultation, and new adherents flocked to his standard. Parties began to form for him and for Pedrarias; for it was deemed impossible they could continue long in harmony.

* Oviedo, part ii., cap. 9, MS. Oviedo, the historian, was present at this consultation, and says that he wrote down the opinions given on the occasion, which the parties signed with their proper hands.

† *Idem.*

The jealousy of the Governor was excited by these circumstances; and he regarded the newly created Adelantado as a dangerous rival and an insidious foe. Just at this critical juncture, Andres Garabito, the agent of Vasco Nuñez, arrived on the coast in a vessel which he had procured at Cuba, and freighted with arms and ammunition, and seventy resolute men, for the secret expedition to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. He anchored six leagues from the harbor, and sent word privately to Vasco Nuñez of his arrival.

Information was immediately carried to Pedrarias, that a mysterious vessel, full of armed men, was hovering on the coast, and holding secret communication with his rival. The suspicious temper of the Governor immediately took the alarm. He fancied some treasonable plot against his authority; his passions mingled with his fears; and, in the first burst of his fury, he ordered that Vasco Nuñez should be seized and confined in a wooden cage. The Bishop of Darien interposed in time to prevent an indignity which it might have been impossible to expiate. He prevailed upon the passionate Governor, not merely to retract the order respecting the cage, but to examine the whole matter with coolness and deliberation. The result proved that his suspicions had been

erroneous; and that the armament had been set on foot without any treasonable intent. Vasco Nuñez was therefore set at liberty, after having agreed to certain precautionary conditions; but he remained cast down in spirit and impoverished in fortune, by the harassing measures of Pedrarias.

END OF VOL. IV.

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